

JEEVADHARA

The Fullness of Life

CELIBATE FRIENDSHIP

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THE FRIENDSHIP
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Editorial

Prayer and friendship are the two supreme values in the Christian life. Prayer constitutes the privileged expression of the love of God - the vertical dimension of Christian life; friendship, on the other hand, constitutes its horizontal dimension. It is this aspect that engages the attention of the present issue of *Jeevadhara* especially in its relationship to celibate life.

The number of men and women consecrated to God, who have learned to cultivate deep friendships, has been steadily increasing over a period of years. As yet, a satisfactory theology of celibate friendship has not been developed. Too little about the meaning and development of celibate friendship has been published so far. Meanwhile, there is a needless loss of vocations owing to ignorance and misunderstanding in this delicate area. Ignorance and imprudence have led many to leap into currents too swift and deep for them to swim through unaided. Some are being more or less forced by some superiors to give up emotional love, or to leave the priesthood or religious life. Such behaviour is mostly prompted by fear and misunderstanding.

In the face of this phenomenon, a frank and open discussion truthfully dealing with the issues involved is certainly called for. We trust that we will succeed in convincing our readers that *prayerful and well-meaning*⁷ celibates can derive immense benefit from the cultivation of friendships. In a mature response to the situation presented by friendship, there is the real possibility of learning how to love God and man. In this circumstance, as in all others that manifest God's will, the situation is one that calls for cooperation with Him in the maximum degree.

The first contributor to this issue, K. Luke, deals with the Scriptural basis of celibate friendship, from the Old Testament aspect, followed by a discussion of its theological foundation by the sectional editor. Cyprian Illickamury throws light on the philosophical aspects of the problem under consideration. May we hope that the material presented here will be a modest contribution to the furtherance of well-ordered love in the life of individual priests and religious, and in the collective life of all mankind.

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Human Love: the Tradition of the Old Testament

Human love¹ is a theme on which the OT dwells with predilection, and to denote it the Hebrew language employs the verbal root 'āhēb,² a root that attests a rich variety of nuances. The Bond of love can exist between the individual and his fellowmen (Lev. 19: 18), parents and children (Hos. 11: 1), friends (1 Sam. 18: 1, 3), and especially between man and woman (Gen. 30: 18, 20). In the present study an endeavour is made to see what the traditions of Israel have to say about the basis of human love, its concrete expression in action, and its excellence. There is no question of treating the subject in an exhaustive fashion for the simple reason that it is very vast, and so we restrict the scope of this enquiry to the *Song of Songs*, the Book in the OT canon that speaks at length of love and its passionate experience.³ Reference will have to be made also to passages in Gen. 1-2 which deal with the origin of sexual differentiation, the very basis of the love between man and woman.

1. It is not our intention to consider here man's love for God, that it too is part of human love in its comprehensive sense.

2. The root occurs 216 times in the Hebrew Bible, discussions in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament I* (Suttgart, 1973) cols. 105-28.

3. With the vast majority of modern exegetes it is taken for granted that the Book is a collection of love songs that used to be sung in ancient Israel at the time of marriage, and that the sense intended by the sacred author is the literal, obvious one, and not the allegorical one, as is popularly held by Christian readers of the OT. The religious significance of the book will be indicated in the opening paragraphs of the second part of the present study.

I. The Basis of Human Love

According to theologians in ancient Israel the very possibility man has of loving a woman comes from a positive action of the Creator, an action that is described as follows by the P writer in his account of mankind's origin:

“So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them” (Gen. 1: 27).

The sacred author's statement is poetical in form, though unfortunately not all translations print the verse as poetry, and in the Hebrew original it is remarkable for the element of rhyme;⁴ the first and the second lines also represent the well-known stylistic device of synonymous parallelism.

The opening line is to be understood as a report that God did, in fact, execute the design He had formed of creating man in His own image.⁵ The question now arises about the nature of the *imago Dei* in man, and at the outset we have to exclude the one-sided view that it consists in man's possession of the immortal, spiritual soul. This is an understanding based upon an anthropology which tends to belittle the human body, and which is altogether alien to the traditions of the OT that visualize man, above all, as a body-person.⁶ It is hoped to show, in the course of this study, that the human body figures in the OT as an entity with an ineffable worth and value.

The interpreter must take the divine image in man concretely and dynamically. “Dynamically” means with reference to activity, namely, that of exercising dominion over the whole of

4. Interpretation of the text in the writer's book, *Genesis 1-3. An Exposition* (in the press); exhaustive discussions in C. Westermann, *Genesis I* (Biblischer Kommentar I/1, Neukirchen, 1975) *passim*.

5. Here we have a literary procedure of the Hebrew writers: they first announce a thing and then speak of its execution; v. 27 thus points back to God's deliberation in v. 26.

6. This point is well brought out by J. Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture I-II* (Copenhagen, 1954) pp. 107ff.

the created world, as is clear from God's command recorded in the immediately ensuing verse (v. 28; cf. Ps. 8: 6-9).⁷ God has appointed man as His double here on earth, in much the same way as rulers in antiquity used to set up their image (statues) "in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear".⁸

"Concretely" points to man as he exists on the level of experience, or, in modern jargon, on the phenomenological level as a being wholly defined by the category of bodiliness.⁹ While thus visualizing the body-person as God's very image, the P writers are guided by the traditions of the prophets who in their visions happened to see Yahweh in human form (Is. 6: 1, etc.). The most remarkable text in this connection is Ez. 1: 26, where the prophet narrates how he saw the Lord seated on his throne, as "likeness as it were of human form".¹⁰ Here we have a clear prelude to the depiction of man as God's image. We leave open the question whether the sacred writers, as suggested by Ludwig Köhler,¹¹ were also thinking of man's erect stature and gait, characteristics which add to his beauty, and differentiate him from all other creatures. In conclusion, man in his body is the image of God.

7. Discussions in Luke, "The Biblical Account of Creation and Terrestrial Realities." *Jeevadhara* 8 (1978) pp. 101-20 (pp. 108-11).

8. G. von Rad, *Genesis* (The Old Testament Library, London 1961) p. 58.

9. Christian tradition, under the influence of Greek and Gnostic ideas, has tended to belittle this aspect of the human person; Indian ascetic tradition too has been wholly negative in its evaluation of the body, though the Rgveda is quite positive on the matter; cf. Luke, "Terrestrial Realities: the Tradition of the Aryans," *Jeevadhara* 8 (1978) pp. 159-80 (pp. 162 ff.).

10. On the text, cf. Luke, "Ezekiel's Vision of Yahweh's Glory." *Indian Ecclesiastical Studies* 1 (1962) pp. 144ff., 196ff.

11. Cf. his article, "Die Grundstelle der Imago-Dei-Lehre," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 4 (1948) pp. 16-22. The importance of the body is stressed by P. Humbert, "L'imago Dei dans l'Ancien Testament," *Etudes sur le récit du paradis et de la chute* (Neuchâtel, 1940) pp. 153-75.

The third line has been interpreted by some ancients as meaning that the first man was created a bisexual being, so that later on the woman could be formed from him; this view, to say the least, is patently absurd and needs no rebuttal. To "male" corresponds in the Hebrew original *zākār* (78 times in the Hebrew OT), a word occurring in Arabic¹² and Accadian¹³ as well, whose etymology, however, remains unknown; perhaps it might originally have meant "perforator". The suggestion has also been made that the designation is derived from *zākār* ("to call upon God in worship") in which case the term will define the male as the one competent to offer worship to God.¹⁴ Be that as it may, in general use *zākār* signifies the male offspring of both animals and men as distinct from the female (Ex. 13: 12. 15. Dt. 4: 16), and specifically, man or the male (Num. 31: 17f. 35). The collective sense "men, male persons" is clearly differentiated (Num. 1: 2. 20. 22 etc.)

"Female" is the rendering of Hebrew *nēbāqāh* (22 times), which originally meant "perforate, the perforated one" (cf. the verbal root *nābaq*, "to perforate, pierce, bore through" in 2 Kg. 18: 21. Is. 36: 6, from which the present noun is derived. The word is used of females of both the animal and human species. The usual designation of woman in Hebrew is *'issāh*, whose assonance with *'is*, "man," has been cleverly exploited by the J writer (Gen. 2: 23),¹⁵ and if these terms are not used by the author of the poem in Gen. 1: 27, the reason might be his intention to enhance the beauty of his literary work by using realistic, picturesque expressions.

The last line of the poem teaches that the fact of mankind's existence in two sexes is the concrete outcome of the Creator's will. Sex is, therefore, something that God has Himself brought into being, so that it is also given the qualification "very good", for only with regard to man's creation has the sacred writer added the evaluatory remark, "And God saw

12. In Arabic the word has also the meaning "penis, membrum virile."

13. Cf. the forms *zikru* and *zakaru*, "male."

14. F. Brown et alii, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (repr., Oxford, 1962) p. 271.

15. On the two words, cf. *Theol. Wörterbuch*, cols. 238-52.

everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1: 31).¹⁶ The possibility of love between the male and the female arises from their being two differentiated entities, and inasmuch as God is himself the author of this differentiation, He is also the author of the love that binds them together. In Gen. 1: 27 theologians of ancient Israel enunciate the sublime truth that the bond of love uniting man and woman is the positive expression of the Creator's salvific will.

The importance of human love is very strongly accentuated by the J writer, who has also put into God's mouth the significant utterance, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). The emphatic clause, "It is not good" must be understood as meaning "it is not in keeping with the Creator's will," for as far as the biblical author is concerned, a thing is good when it is what God wants it to be. The Creator, then, does not find pleasure in man's being a lonely person, and, therefore, decides to make for him "a helper fit for him"; the expression in the Hebrew original literally means "a help according to what is in front of him", i. e., corresponding to him, in the sense of being equal and adequate to him.¹⁷

God wants man to have a counterpart, an "other", with whom he can enter into a responsible relationship of life; his

16. Compare, with this optimistic statement regarding sex, the following utterances from the *Mahābhārata*: "I would fain hear of women's character...., for women are the root of evils; for they are held to be lightminded;" "Of a truth there is naught worse than women; for women are the root of evils" (J. J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India. A Study in the Comparative History of Indian Culture* [repr., Delhi, 1971] p. 497). According to the Arabs, "Woman is the source of all evil on earth, and God only made this monster that man should learn to turn from earthly things" (Meyer, *ibid.*, n. 4)

17. This idea is conveyed in ordinary parlance with the help of the term "helpmate," which is a compound created from "help meet" (i. e., fitting, proper). The Hebrew original has only one single expression, namely *kenaegdō*, corresponding to "according to what is in front of him."

ego has to be completed and perfected by the "other who can be addressed as "thou", and as this "other" was nowhere to be found in the animal world (Gen. 2:20), God in a most marvellous way, brought the woman into being.

The J writer in his account of the origin of woman¹⁸ accentuates the element of mystery by describing how the man was cast into a deep slumber when his counterpart was being brought into existence. On seeing his counterpart he was struck with wonder and burst forth into an exclamation (Gen. 2:23), whose second half, in the Hebrew original, involves an interesting play on words:

"She shall be called *'issāh* (woman),
because she was taken out of *is* (man)."

Using Sanskrit words, we may thus translate the Yahwist's thought: "She shall be called *nārī*¹⁹ (woman), because she was taken out of *nara-* (man)." What this pun serves to accentuate is that the woman is truly man's equal, and equality arises from the fact that she is the bone of man's bone and the flesh of his flesh.

Two equals existing in two sexes as adequate helps to each other are a profound mystery of God's work of creation, a mystery that is the source of the love that exists between the male and the female; the basis of love between the two sexes is, therefore, God's holy and salvific will as it comes to expression through a specific creative act of His omnipotence and wisdom.

II. Love in Action

The OT, and particularly the *Song of Songs*, describes the various ways in which human love discloses itself, the most important of them being companionship, enjoyment of beauty, and union between man and woman. Before we pass on to the study of these three facets, three observations are a *propos* of the

18. Westermann, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-18.

19. Unlike *'issāh* which has no etymological relation whatever with *'is*, the present term is related to *nara-*, and both go back to the base *nā-* (*nar-*); they are also cognates of Greek *anēr*, etc.

Song of Songs, from which virtually all citations are taken. First, in the passages to be cited there are details and minutiae which are quite obscure, though the general sense – the expression of love between bride and bridegroom – is quite clear. Secondly, we are in the dark about the setting in life of the individual poetical units, and it is not always easy to say where one unit ends and the next begins. Thirdly, the thought of God is altogether absent from the poetical pieces, an absence which is the result of the poets' deliberate endeavour to keep God out of the whole affair of sex and its active use on the part of man.²⁰

The last statement may sound shocking to some readers, but let them remember that Israel carefully dissociated sex from God, though she knew only too well that he was its author; and to understand this peculiar point of view we have to bear in mind the concrete *milieu* in which the Israelites were living. Sex was for the Gentile world something closely associated with religion and cult, and such practices as sacred prostitution, dedication of girls on their reaching the age of puberty to the god of life, *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage²¹ etc. were an integral part of the naturalistic religions of antiquity. There were, in Israel, men who fell victims to the seductions of the sex-oriented cult of the Canaanites, and to preserve the true faith from contamination, it was essential to remove everything connected with the exercise of the sex power from Yahweh and His worship. The undeniable profanity of certain pieces in the *Song of Songs* is, then, a vehement protest against the distortions of sex, and also an affirmation of Yahweh's transcendent holiness which cannot brook any superstition: herein lies the theological significance of the Book. Let us now pass on to a succinct survey of the expressions of love mentioned in the opening paragraph.

Companionship, or simply being together, is a thing for which the lovers most earnestly yearn; when the bridegroom is absent the bride wants to know where he is:

20. On this point, cf. especially G. Gerleman, *Das Hohelied* (Biblischer Kommentar 18, Neukirchen, 1965) pp. 84f.

21. Brief discussion in Luke, "Iddindagān and Inanna: A Hieros Gamos Test of the 20th Century B.C.," *The Living Word* 82 (1976) pp. 79–101.

"Tell me, you whom my soul loves,
where you pasture your flock,
where you make it lie down at noon...." (1:7).

This question is addressed to the absent lover and there is nothing unusual about it, but at times the girl may tell her companions:

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,²²
if you find my beloved that you tell him,
I am sick with love" (5:8).

They may answer her:

Whither has your beloved gone;
O fairest among women...
that we may seek him with you?" (6:1)

Love, then, longs for companionship.

The fiancee's eagerness for companionship can be so great that she gets all sorts of fantastic dreams; 3:1-5 is the account of a dream of this kind:

"Upon my bed by night
I sought him whom my soul loves;
I sought him but found him not...
'I will now arise and go about the city....
The watchmen found me...
'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'
Scarcely had I passed them,
when I found him whom my soul loves.
I held him and would not let him go..."

5 : 2-8 is another dream, with a different conclusion:

"I slept but my heart was awake.
Hark! My beloved is knocking.
'Open to me my sister, my love,

22. The interpretation of this phrase is difficult; the persons meant are in all likelihood the maiden's companions, and since the bridegroom is depicted as Solomon and the bride as Shulammite (cf. n. 29), they are represented in the *Song* as the court ladies of Jerusalem.

my dove, my perfect one....²³
 My beloved put his hand to the latch,
 and my heart was thrilled within me.
 I arose to open to my beloved....
 I opened to my beloved,
 but my beloved had turned and gone...
 I sought him but found him not;
 I called him but he gave no answer.
 The watchmen found me,
 as they went about the city;
 they beat me, they wounded me...²⁴

The two poetical pieces here cited must be understood in the light of all that we know of the passionate experience of love and the reveries and daydreams that accompany it.

23. "Open to me...." in Hebrew is remarkable for the element *-î -tî* which signifies endearment: *pithî-lî*, ^a*hôti*, *ra'yâtî*, *yônatî tammâtî*. In the love-songs from the ancient Orient the bride is often addressed as sister and the bridegroom as brother; the following extract is from a Sumerian love-song:

"Set me free, my sister, set me free,
 Come, my beloved sister, I would go to the palace,
 You will be a little daughter before my father...."

These words are addressed by Dumuzi to his beloved Inanna (*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament. Supplement* [Princeton, 1969] p. 645). The tradition of Egypt is no less clear on the point, as is shown by the following dialogue between a maiden and her lover: "My brother, it is pleasant to go to the (pond) in order to bathe me in your presence, that I may let you see my beauty in my tunic of finest royal linen... ." "The love of my sister is upon yonder side.... I see my sister coming and my heart rejoices. My arms are wide open to embrace her... ." (A. Erman, *The Ancient Egyptians. A Sourcebook of their Writings* [Herper Torchbooks, New York, 1966] p. 243).

24. The watchmen, taking her to be a woman of bad character who is on the lookout to entice men, beat her up. In ancient Israel nocturnal wanderings on the part of girls who had reached the age of marriage was unimaginable, and that is why the two accounts are to be classified as dream experiences.

Once they are together, they kiss and embrace each other (1 : 2. 2 : 6. 8 : 3), and sing songs of love. As a matter of fact, the prophet Jeremiah speaks a number of times of the sound of the bride's and the bridegroom's song (7 : 34. 16 : 9. 25 : 10. 33 : 11), a widespread custom in ancient Israel, no doubt, in the light of which we have to understand the dialogal pieces of love in the *Song of Songs* (1 : 12-2 : 7). The bride says:

“I am a rose of Sharon,
a lily of the valleys” (2 : 1).

The bridegroom makes the comment:

“As a lily among the brambles,
so is my love among maidens” (2 : 2).²⁵

The love the girl evinces, the words that come out of her mouth, and the scent of her garments throw the boy into an ecstasy of happiness (4 : 10 f.), and conversely, the girl may feel sick with love and faint, exclaiming as she loses consciousness:

“Sustain me with raisins,
refresh me with apples;
for I am sick with love” (2 ; 5).²⁶

Looking at his unconscious fiancee, the bridegroom requests her companions not to disturb her:

“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles and hinds of the field,
that you stir not up nor awaken the beloved...”

(2 : 7. 3 : 5. 8 : 4).²⁷

Companionship leads, then, the lovers to ecstasy.

25. Dialogues of this sort occur in ancient oriental sources.

26. Incidentally apples and raisins were regarded as medicines by the ancients; hippiatric prescriptions from Ugarit speak of a mixture made of fig cakes and raisins (translation in C. H. Gordon. *Ugaritic Literature* [Rome, 1949] pp. 128f.). Compare 2 kg. 20:7 where the prescription is given to lay a cake of figs on a boil for cure.

27. The literal rendering of the last word will be “love” (in the abstract), but abstract terms can also denote things concrete

The bridegroom's enjoyment of the bride's beauty and *vice versa* are an integral part of the experience of love. Here we wish to recall the sublime teaching of the book of Genesis that the human body is itself the concrete image of God, and this conviction stands in the rear of the glowing descriptions of the body in the Song of Songs, descriptions which used to be sung aloud on the occasion of the wedding festival.²⁸ What follows is the bridegroom's account of the maiden's charms:

"Behold, you are beautiful, my love....
 Your eyes are doves behind your veil.
 Your hair is a flock of goats,
 moving down the slopes of Gilead.
 Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes...
 Your lips are like scarlet thread,
 and your mouth is lovely.
 Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate...
 Your neck is like the tower of David...
 Your two breasts are like two fawns...
 You are all fair my love;
 there is no flaw in you" (4 : 1 - 9).

In order that the bride's physical beauty may be enjoyed all the more fully she may be asked to execute a dance, during which she will be praised for her attractiveness:

"Return, return, O Shulammite,²⁹
 return, return, that we may look upon you....
 How graceful are your feet in sandals,
 O queenly maiden!
 Your rounded thighs are like jewels,
 the work of a master hand.
 Your navel is a rounded bowl

28. Among the Arabs this type of description is known as *wasf*, specimens of which have been published by specialists in Arabic poetry.

29. During the marriage festival the bride and the bridegroom used to be regarded as queen and king, and since in the *Song* the youth figures as Solomon, the maiden is called *sūlammīt*, an artistically created feminine form of the ruler's name. Please note that 6 : 13 in the *RSV* text corresponds to 7 : 1 in the original.

that never lacks mixed wine.
 Your belly is a heap of wheat,
 encircled with lilies.
 Your two breasts are like two fawns,
 twins of a gazelle.
 Your neck is like an ivory tower....
 Your head crowns you like Carmel,
 and your flowing locks are like purple;
 a king is held captive in the tresses" (6: 13-7:9).

It is not clear whether the speaker here is the bridegroom or the spectators at large.

The bride too will wax eloquent when she starts speaking about the boy's handsome features:

"My beloved is all radiant and ruddy,
 distinguished among ten thousand.
 His head is the finest gold;
 his locks are wavy, black as a raven.
 His eyes are like doves beside springs of water,
 bathed in milk, fitly set.
 His cheeks are like beds of spices....
 His lips are lilies, distilling liquid myrrh....
 His speech is most sweet,
 and he is altogether desireable.

This is my beloved and this is my friend...." (5: 10-16). The female sees in the handsome young man who is the object of her love the very image of God, and once we bear in mind this fact, the realism of the descriptions in the *Song of Songs* will not cause us any scandal.

The union of the two protagonists of the *Song of Songs* in love is clearly stressed:

"My beloved is mine and I am his" (2:16).
 "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (6:3).
 "I am my beloved's and his desire is for me" (7:10).³⁰

30. 7: 10 (Hebrew 7:11) contains the remarkable word "desire," *tesûqâh*, which occurs just twice more in the OT (Gen. 3:16. 4:7); in God's words of punishment addressed to the

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“Come, my beloved,
let us go forth into the fields,
let us lode in the villages;
let us go out early to the vineyards,
and see whether the vines have budded,
whether the grape blossoms are opened,
and the pomegranates are in bloom.
There I will give you my love” (7: 11f.).

There is a special reason for seeking privacy while enjoying love:

“If I met you outside, I would kiss you,
and none would despise me.
I would lead you and bring you....
into the chamber of her that conceived me,
I would give you spiced wine to drink,
the juice of my pomegranates” (8:1f.).

As they enjoy the bliss of union, the boy may remind the girl of their initial experience of love when they met for the first time:

“Under the apple tree I awakened you.
There your mother was in travail with you,
there she who bore you was in travail” (8:5).

The interpretation of the verse here cited is difficult,³¹ particularly since it is fragmentary. In 2:3 the maiden had likened the lover to an apple tree, in whose shade she had sat with delight and enjoyed the fruits. The motif occurring here is met also in Egyptian love songs.³²

woman after sin, it is said: “Your *tesâqâh* shall be for your husband.” According to the poet who created the utterance in 7:10, the curse in paradise has been reversed in the case of the bride the heroine of his poems!

31. The meaning of “I awakened you” remains obscure, and to contend that it signifies premarital sex or the girl’s defloweration by force is unjustified. The only thing we can say is that the utterance is too fragmentary to yield any sense.

32. The motif of being under the tree occurs in ancient Egyptian love lyric (Erman, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-51).

The most remarkable statement regarding the union of man and woman in love occurs in the J account of creation: "Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).³³ A detailed exegesis of this text cannot be attempted here, as it will have to be highly technical.³⁴ However, the reader's attention is called to a subtle thought which the sacred writer has expressed here: what had, before the woman's creation, been one flesh, must now, after her emergence as a distinct entity, become one flesh through the active and effective exercise of the power of sex in the matrimonial state. The Yahwist visualizes this becoming one as the Creator's will with regard to the couple he had most mysteriously brought into being, and this particular point of view of his differs from that of the P writer whose approach to the problem of sex is primarily abstract and theoretical.

III. The Excellence of Human Love

The *Song of Songs* includes an eulogy of love which has no parallel anywhere in the Bible, and which is worth citing:

"Love is strong as death,
jealousy is cruel as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a most vehement flame.
Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If a man offered for love
all the wealth of his house,
it would be utterly scorned (8:6f.).

All the lines with the exception of the last three are parallelistically constructed, so that we can distinguish three distinct units of two lines each, the second line in these units embodying a statement that involves an intensification of the thought of the first; this detail is the key to the understanding of the poem.

"Love," *'ah^abāh* (29 times), formed from the root *'āhēb*, is a late term in the Hebrew Scriptures, denoting most of the time

33. This verse is a statement issued by the sacred author, and not part of the man's exclamation as he caught sight of the woman.

34. Westermann, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-18.

the bond of affection that is the very basis of the union between man and woman, and naturally Song is quite fond of it (2:4. 5:7. 3:5. 10. 7:7. 8:4. 7bis). "Jealousy", *qin'āh* (43 times) is a feeling that is much stronger and much more intense than love; the Hebrew word has also the meanings "ardour, zeal, fierce anger", etc., and the nuance "jealousy" seems to have been suggested by the colour produced in the face by deep emotion.³⁵ When there is question of love between man and woman *qin'āh* points to the utter impossibility of tolerating a rival.

"Strong", '*azzāh*, is an adjective (feminine in gender), derived from the base '*āzaz* found in Ethiopic, Arabic,³⁶ Accadian,³⁷ etc. The adjective generally means "strong, mighty, powerful", and at times also "fierce" (Jdg. 14:14. 18 etc.), and only in the passage under consideration is it used of love. "Cruel", *qāsāh* (feminine) has the general sense "hard, severe, rough, rude, fierce", and so on, and in 8:6 what the poet intends to say is that "jealousy" that will tolerate no rival is something most intense and fierce; the word is evidently stronger than its parallel in its range of nuances.

"Death", *māwaet* (161 times) is a common Semitic term. The ancient Semites, visualizing death as a monster, used to personify it, and the Israelites were wont to picture him as thief who enters the house through the window (Jer. 9: 21),³⁸ and from whose clutches Yahweh alone can save man. In Hebrew poetry death occurs in parallelism with *s'ōl* (65 times),³⁹ "underworld, nether world, the world of the dead" (Is. 28: 15. 18. 38: 18. Hos. 14: 14. H̄b. 2: 5 etc.), and according to ancient Israelite belief, once a person reached Sheol there was no escape for him thence: It is the land of no return (Job 16: 22), and it will also

35. Thus Brown et alii *op. cit.*, p. 888.

36. Cf. the common Moslem name *Azzīz*!

37. The root appears in Accadian as *ezēzu* and means "to be angry, run into a rage," etc.

38. According to Ugaritic mythology the god Baal, when a palace was built for him, did not want to have a window put, lest his rival the god Mot (= Death) should enter through it (Anath 51: V:120-127; VI:1-9).

39. The etymology of this important term is not clear.

never say, "Enough" (Prv. 30: 16), so that it is something much worse than death the cunning thief and fierce monster.

"Its flashes" translates *r'ṣāpaehā*, from the noun *raesaē* (exclusively poetical) which denotes fire-bolts, flames of lightning, and the like. Some exegetes change the reading "flashes of *ē's*" (fire) to "flashes of *ēl*" (God), thus obtaining the parallelistic pair "flashes of God" and "flame of Yah(weh)," but such a change of the text is unwarranted. Underlying "a most vehement flame" there is in the Hebrew original a single expression, namely: *salhaebaetyāh*, where the final element *-yāh* looks apparently like the abbreviation of the divine name Yahweh, and so the word has been translated as "flames of Yahweh". The OT occasionally speaks of the fire of Yahweh (Num. 11: 1. 1 Kg. 18: 38; cf. 2 Kg. 11: 2. Job 11: 6), that is to say, very strong lightning, but since the Song of Songs deliberately avoids the name of God, the proposed rendering becomes unlikely. In Hebrew the suffix *-yāh* serves to convey the idea of intensity,⁴⁰ so that it becomes quite legitimate to translate the word in the original as a superlative, "a most vehement flame".

"Many waters" and "floods" too are parallelistic expressions, which signify the chaotic waters that are ever trying to swallow up the earth. It may be recalled here that according to Semitic mythology creation means God's victory over the forces of chaos, typified by the raging ocean, and in the Book of Job read how the Lord locked up the chaotic waters under bars, telling them: "Thus far you shall come, and no farther..." (38: 8-11). Suppose these waters ever managed to break through the barriers and approach the lovers: even then they will not be able to quench or drown their love for each other.

Note too the parallelistic use of the verbs "quench" and "drown"; in Hebrew the first verb, *kābāh*,⁴¹ generally denotes the extinguishing of fire and lamps, and even of dimly burning wicks, and its nuance is rather mild, where its pair, *sāṭaf*, stands for the river's overflow, its washing away and sweeping away whatever it encounters; it, therefore, conveys the idea of intensity.

40. Gerleman, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

41. The Hebrew original uses here the intensive stem of the present root.

Love is so inestimable that no man will ever be able to give anything adequate, proportionate or equal to it, and were anyone to give his entire wealth, it would be nothing. "Wealth" has as its equivalent *hōn*, an almost exclusively poetical term used with predilection in the Book of Proverbs. In addition to the literal meaning, it implies the nuances of sufficiency, high value, price, etc. "It would be utterly scorned" renders the emphatic Hebrew expression *bōz yābūzū* (literally, "they shall utterly scorn"). The plural here has evidently the impersonal sense.) In the original the first word is the infinitive of the exclusively poetical root *būz* "to despise, show contempt", – and the second a finite form of the same root. In the Hebrew language the finite verb preceded by the infinitive of its root involves emphasis on the idea conveyed. In the present instance the element alliteration too should not be lost sight of. Contempt can arise from a person's pride and wickedness, but it can also stem from the awareness of the lack of intrinsic worth and value of a person or thing: in comparison with love, wealth is something wholly worthless.

The poetical piece that has been analysed is veritable praise of the excellence of love, and as the girl utters it, she is inviting the boy, the object of her love, to fidelity. She tells her lover that matrimonial love is such an excellent thing that there is nothing comparable to it, and whatever sacrifices he may make for its sake, they are nothing. The call to fidelity is quite beautifully expressed in the opening words of v. 6:

"Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm."

An Egyptian love song, surviving in a mutilated form, contains the following stanza:

"O would that I were a signet-ring
that [sits on your finger]
[Then you would preserve me]
as something that renders your whole life happy"⁴²

42. S. Schott, *Altägyptische Liebeslieder eingeleitet und übertragen* (Die Bibliothek der alten Welt. Reihe: Der Alte Orient' Zurich, 1950), p. 62; for the German text, cf. Gerleman, *op. cit.* p. 217.

"Ring," in the original *hôtām*, a noun derived from the verb *hâtam*, "to seal, affix seal up", means "signet-ring, seal", with engravings or designs (Ex. 28: 11. 21. 26 etc.), which used to be hung around the neck by a cord (Gen. 38: 18),⁴³ or worn on the finger of the right hand (Jer. 22: 24). In the bride's mouth "upon the heart/arm" seems apparently to combine the two customs, and it is likely that the statement includes some reference to earlier passages. The bride had said that the lover was for her a bag of myrrh lying between her breasts (1: 13), and now she wants to lie close to his heart; she had expressed the wish that the young man's right hand embrace her (2: 6), and now she wants to be given a place upon his right arm (hand).

The force of love can, according to the OT, be such that it can make a man face trials and hardship, even when these happen to be of very long duration. Jacob felt such an irresistible love for Rachel that he was ready, for her sake, to do seven years of service to Laban her father, and after recording the contract he entered into with the latter, the biblical writer adds the comment: "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her" (Gen. 30: 20). Love appears here as a good that can goad a person on to the most painful sacrifices: it must, therefore, be something most excellent.

.....

The religious traditions of Israel take for granted the excellence and nobility of human love, and even though they are most careful to dissociate sex from God, they nevertheless see in the matrimonial bond a symbol of Yahweh's love for the nation he has chosen as his own, and thus there has arisen the matrimonial allegory, particularly in the preaching of the prophets:

43. Von Rad, while commenting upon Gen. 38:18 observes that "in Israel it can only have been the sign of a well-to-do man, of a fine lord" (*op. cit.*, p. 355). Herodotus on his part reports that "every Babylonian carried a signet ring and a carefully carved staff" (*ibid.*). Numerous cylinder seals have been unearthed by archaeologists from Mesopotamia, and Palestine too has yielded just a few seals, with inscriptions mentioning the owner, and they all date from the regal period (*Ancient Near Eastern Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* [Princeton, 1955] nos. 276-78). Arm-ring too has been found by archaeologists: the figure of a certain Syrian god (15th/ 14th century B. C.) has on its raised right arm, brandishing a weapon, a gold ring (*ibid.*, no. 481).

the Lord is the bridegroom and Israel his bride.⁴⁴ This allegorical tradition is also continued by the NT which visualizes the relationship between Christ and the Church as a matrimonial bond.

The theme of consecrated chastity, the idea of the renunciation of the married state of life for the sake of the kingdom, the charism of celibacy,⁴⁵ is something alien to the perspectives of the OT. We know that Jeremiah was asked by God to abstain from marriage and begetting children (16: 2), and a certain Jewish scholar once asked how he could ever think of marriage when he was in love with God's *tôrâh* ("law") but these are exceptional cases. We can, therefore, say that the special charism God bestowed upon the community of his people in the first dispensation was to enter into the married state of life, foster mutual love and affection, and raise up a family.⁴⁶

Love between husband and wife is not, however, the whole of human life, for love is something universal, which is the reason why the OT insists also on the Israelite's obligation to love his neighbour.⁴⁷ In the light of God's revelation in the OT, love in its manifold forms is a supreme value.

Calvary, Trichur-680004

K. Luke

44. Cf. especially the tradition of the book of Hosea.

45. It should not be forgotten that married life too is a charism.

46. At times it is said that the Jewish sectarians of Qumran were living a celibate life, which is anything but the whole truth. As a matter of fact one of the documents from Qumran embodies the injunction that a young man should marry when he is twenty years old, since only at this age is he in a position to know good and evil (on the text, cf. E. Lohse, *Die Texte aus Qumran* [Munich, 1964] p. 282, n. 6), and moreover there are references to married men in some of the documents. Another item of interest is that the large cemetery at Qumran, with about 11,000 tombs, contained a few skeletons of women and children as well. On the other hand there is the testimony of ancient writers that the Essenes lived a celibate life, which was certainly something most unusual both in the Jewish and non-Jewish world. The truth seems to have been that some of the Essenes abstained from marriage, and in this case we have, of course, a genuine Jewish antecedent to the NT tradition of celibate life.

The Theology of Celibate Friendship

The question of deep friendships looms large in the lives of many consecrated celibates today. At seminars, courses, counselling sessions and on several other occasions, the issue of celibate friendship crops up and meets with a variety of responses. Pastoral experience testifies to the fact that the lives of some celibates have been shattered by intimate friendships and those of many others have been enriched and regenerated by them.

The signs of the time impel us to try to acquire a thorough grasp of the various aspects – theological, philosophical, psychological and pastoral – of friendship in celibate life. To push the subject underground under the pretext that there is no problem at all in this area is to invite the risk of harming many genuine consecrated lives. Those who face the issue of the need of love in their lives are often left alone, uncomfortable and confused. They doubt whether they have an authentic vocation of celibacy because of this need. These people need help and guidance and often they have nowhere to turn for advice. For such people this article will perhaps serve as a source of enlightenment and support; it may help them to be at peace before the Lord. It is not intended to encourage unscrupulous, self-deceiving, “hide-and-seek” celibates, who want to eat of the forbidden “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” and at the same time enjoy the love and friendship of Christ, the tremendous Lover of mankind. It is meant to clarify the beauty and utility of Christ-centred love and friendship, to help the *good, conscientious and prayerful* celibates, who want to give love but who are afraid to do so.

A. The Trinitarian basis of celibate friendship

The names of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, especially the first and the second, imply a mutual relationship. It is in the act of begetting, of giving Himself, of “being-for-the-other”,

that God is Father. Similarly it is in the act of returning that love, of "being-for-the-other" that God is Son. To love and be loved is the nature and being of God.

Since we are the images of God, to love and be loved is the law of our being too. The need for human love is nothing less than a reflection of the companionship existing in the Holy Trinity. After He had created man, God said: "It is not good that man is alone". That man has been created with a need for companionship flows directly from the fact that he is an image of God. The divine Persons do not live solitarily but as Father, Son and Holy Spirit within one God in the closest possible communion.

Friendship, moreover, is a gift from God. God's providence arranges things in such a way that His children find someone who will give a human expression to His infinite tenderness and love for them.

B. The Christological foundation of Celibate friendship

Since we are dealing with a theological problem with vital consequences for consecrated celibates, we ought, as far as possible, to base it on the life of Our Lord. We have in Christ a perfect exemplar of celibate friendship. Profound study of, and deep meditation on, the manner of Our Lord's dealing with people teaches us how we must relate to others affectively. Our Lord had deep affection and sympathy for those who came into contact with Him.

From the Gospels we clearly learn that Christ had a tender affection for His mother. His love for children was special. St. John speaks about the way in which Christ called Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael and himself. He refers to several episodes which give us a clear picture of the loving relationship which Our Lord had with His closest followers. All these references attest to Christ's sensitiveness to, and familiarity with, them and His yearning to be in their company. He goes out of His way to care for them and to express His love for them. Particularly significant is Our Lord's relationship with women. The New Testament describes His attitude towards them as

warm, loving, delicate and tactful. Since this is an important topic in the present context it is dealt with in some detail and the inspiring book *In Search of God's Ideal Woman* by Dorothy Pape¹ is drawn on.

a. Woman in Christ's teaching

1) After performing some miracles in Galilee, Jesus returned home to begin His public ministry in Nazareth; and in His first discourse He used as illustrations the Gentile widow who had cared for Elijah and the Gentile general, Naaman, who was healed of leprosy by Elisha.² We read of a certain woman, crippled for eighteen years, whom Christ healed on the Sabbath in a synagogue. He evidently noted her in the women's gallery, called her down beside Him and actually touched her, bringing immediate healing. In response, she glorified God, presumably in an audible voice. When the ruler of the synagogue remonstrated at this double breach of law and custom, Christ answered: "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"³ Christ gave the woman a title of honour, not merely indicating that she was of more value than an animal but also emphasizing her spiritual status and privilege as a daughter of Abraham, the father of the Jewish race.

On another Sabbath, when He healed a man with dropsy and was again criticized, He merely answered: "Which of you, having an ass or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?"⁴ Yet on the previous occasion He had taken the trouble to emphasize the woman's worth and spiritual status.

When some unbelieving Jews came demanding a sign from heaven, the Lord used both a male and female illustration to drive home His point. He rebuked these Jews for not believing the evidence of what He had done already by saying that the

1) Dorothy Pape, *In Search of God's Ideal Woman*, Downers Grove, 1977, pp. 35-83

2) Lk 4: 25-27 3) Lk 13: 15-16 4) Lk 14: 5

men of Niniveh, who had believed Jonah's message and repented, would judge them for their unbelief. He added that the Queen of the South would rise up in judgment against them, for she had gone on a long journey to hear the wisdom of Solomon, while they had a greater than Solomon in their midst.⁵

In His teaching about the kingdom of God, Christ used illustrations referring to both sexes. To explain the nature of the kingdom, He said it is like a man planting mustard seed in his garden and like a woman mixing yeast in her flour to make bread.⁶ He also included what He knew they would regard as the worst of both sexes when He told the religious leaders that publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them.⁷ To reveal His great concern for each individual member of lost humanity, Christ told the stories of a shepherd looking in dangerous places for his one lost sheep and a woman searching and sweeping every nook and corner of her house for her one lost coin.⁸

Among the parables illustrating different aspects of prayer is one about a woman who finally got an unjust judge to act on her behalf simply because she persisted in asking him until he was sick of the sight of her. This is followed by the story of two men who went into the temple to pray. One, a pharisee, prayed only with himself; the other, a publican, prayed a penitential prayer to God.⁹

In warning people to be ready for His second coming, Jesus used a parable about men to whom various amounts of money were given to use until their master's return and a parable about ten virgins, half of whom were not prepared for the coming of the bridegroom¹⁰. When explaining the suddenness of His coming, He stated that two men would be working in a field and one would be taken, the other left, and that the same thing would happen in the case of two women grinding corn at a mill¹¹.

5) *Lk* 11: 29-32

6) *Lk* 13: 19-21

7) *Mt* 21: 31

8) *Lk* 15: 3-10

9) *Lk* 18: 1-14

10) *Mt* 25

11) *Mt* 24: 40-41

2) In the God of the Bible there is a wonderful blend of the ideal characteristics of both father and mother. In the Old Testament Isaiah gives us a picture of the latter: "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you"¹². We also have a simile of motherhood in Isaiah 66:13: "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you".

On the other hand, Christ often stressed the father nature of God and taught the disciples to use that name in prayer. He usually referred to Himself as Son of Man. His statement "the hairs of your head are all numbered" in God's sight, conjures up a picture of a mother lovingly brushing her child's hair each day, knowing so well each differing glint in colour and each wayward curl. Christ also once attributed a mother's instinct to Himself when He said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings"¹³.

3) Nowhere do we find Christ giving instructions to women as women, that is, nowhere does He give commands applicable to women only. He did not tell Martha and Mary that they ought to get married. He did not rebuke the mothers present at the feeding of the four thousand for being away from home three days listening to theology. He did not give any directions about housekeeping or about women's place in the synagogue.

It is noteworthy, too, that the things on which Christ said that those who claimed Him as Lord would finally be judged—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and prisoners—are things which mostly can and should be done equally by men and women¹⁴.

We cannot help noticing that, in a few instances, Christ seems to have taken special care to include women in His teaching. In Mark 7:10-11, when speaking about honouring parents, He repeats *father* and *mother* four times in two verses. He could

12) *Is* 49: 15

13) *Mt* 23: 37

14) *Mt* 25: 31-46

have used the word "parents" instead. Here He seems to be emphasizing that both father and mother are to be honoured equally.

When speaking of the cost of discipleship, He also included the female members of families as being affected: "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law"¹⁵. Again: "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or land, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life"¹⁶.

Another memorable occasion when Christ deliberately added the female element is recorded by both Matthew and Mark. "While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him this, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?' And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brethren! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother'¹⁷. Jesus took the trouble to add the word *sister*.

b. Women in Christ's company

Christ did not call a woman to be among the twelve apostles chosen at the beginning of His public ministry to forsake their work and go with Him everywhere. To have called a single woman would obviously have led to unsavory suspicions, while most married women were presumably busy taking care of their families. It is remarkable, therefore, that we later do find women travelling in His company.

15) Lk 12: 51-53

16) Mk 10: 29-30

17) Mt 12: 46-50; Mk 3: 31-35

It would generally be agreed that men are, on the whole, more qualified for apostolic responsibilities. From a physical point of view alone, their voices are stronger and so were better suited to preaching, particularly before the days of amplifiers. They are also free from the time-demanding work of bearing and rearing children. Further, many men have objective, analytical minds, able to isolate the principles of theology. Perhaps the majority of women tend to be more interested in people than concepts, and, while this can be a real advantage in Christian work, it alone is not enough for the diffusion of the Good News.

It is noteworthy, however, that the Gospels record two occasions where Christ defended women's intuition against the reasoning of the apostles. When some women brought their children to Jesus to be blessed, the disciples rebuked them and tried to keep them away. Jesus was indignant at this, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God".¹⁸ When Mary of Bethany poured costly ointment on Jesus' head, the disciples were angry at this "waste". The Lord said then that this woman's act would be spoken of as a memorial to her wherever the Gospel was preached.

Considering the cultural context and the practical problems, it is all the more surprising to read that women were added to Jesus' company for an unspecified length of time: "Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means."¹⁹

We can appreciate the sense of hope, comfort, understanding and inspiration womanhood receives from studying Christ in the Gospels. To such a Lord women have always been drawn. Later we find them bravely continuing in His company right through the long hours of the crucifixion and beyond.

18) *Mk* 10: 14

19) *Lk* 8: 1-3

c. Christ's courtesy to women

Having looked at women in general both in Christ's teaching and in His company, we come now to some of the most inspiring parts of the Gospels: Christ's contacts and conversations with individual women during His ministry on earth. What is unique and revolutionary about His attitude to women is His obvious concern and appreciation for them as individuals. Not only did He deign to speak to them, but He actually revealed to them new spiritual truths.

To many people, the most surprising instances of Christ's courtesy are His interviews with adulteresses. Let us look first at the story in John 8: 2-11. Jesus was teaching in the temple courtyard when some of the scribes and pharisees came along dragging a woman. They set the woman in the midst of the circle of those listening to Christ and said: "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?"

The woman's accusers continued to press Him for an answer. So He uttered that amazing sentence which only the sinless Christ could have thought of saying: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."

John states that "they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest". Then Jesus stood up and spoke to the woman those inimitable words of comfort, yet words which did not overlook her failure. "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" Jesus asked. And when she replied : "No one, Lord", Jesus said: "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."

Another woman, a prostitute, came to Jesus at a feast, carrying an alabaster box of very expensive ointment: "and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who

and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner".²⁰

Jesus knew what this man was thinking, and, after telling the story of the creditor who forgave two debtors, Jesus turned toward the woman and spoke a truth which has been evident down through the centuries in the Christian Church: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." He concluded with a word for the woman herself, again one of comfort, renewal and hope: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

The last of this trio of stories concerns the woman at the well.²¹ Christ gently brought the woman back to the main issue of not *where* but *how* God is to be worshipped. It is in spirit and in truth, by men and women, whether Jew, Gentile or half-breed Samaritan, who have drunk of that water of life which only the Messiah himself can give. In this instruction His supreme courtesy to women again shone through.

d. Christ's confidence in women

The woman at the well provides a good example, on two scores, of the confidence Christ placed in women. The first was His completely unembarrassed assumption that women would not misconstrue His approach to, or friendship with them. Otherwise He would never have spoken to this woman in the first place. The second was His confidence in the ability of women, even such unlikely ones as she, to comprehend spiritual truth. Some of Jesus' most profound revelations about Himself and His Father were given in private teaching to women. This indicates His appreciation not only of the intellectual capacities of women but also of their spiritual capabilities.

To such a seemingly unlikely candidate for theological insights as the woman at the well, Jesus offered "a spring of water welling up to eternal life". He told her the great fact that God is a spirit, and that where He is worshipped is not the important point but how He is worshipped, namely, "in spirit and truth".

20) Lk 7: 38-39

21) Jn 4: 5-30

To take another example of Christ's confidence in women, there is that famous scene in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus.²² The Gospels tell us that Christ loved both Martha and Mary and Martha's turn came for a great spiritual revelation. It was to her that Jesus spoke the astounding words which have brought comfort and hope to millions of people in the face of death: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die".²³

Perhaps the most remarkable instance of Christ's confidence in women was when He gave the first revelation of His risen life to one woman or more. We may wonder why Christ gave them this privilege of delivering the most startling piece of news the world has ever heard. Why not to Peter and John, the leading apostles, who apparently had been at that very spot just a few minutes before?

Finally, Christ showed His confidence in women by giving His highest praise to three of them. To the Syrophenician woman seeking healing for her daughter, He said: "Great is your faith!" Others might have thought that she was only concerned with getting her girl healed, exercising a selfish persistence at a source to which she was not entitled. Christ saw her action as the result of her understanding of who He was and of a real faith in His power and concern.

The disciples saw Mary's pouring of expensive ointment on Jesus' head as a sentimental extravagance. Christ recognized it as the result of her intuition motivated by her deep devotion and by gratitude for what He had done in her life. And He promised that her act would be remembered and preached throughout the world as a memorial to her.

When He saw a poor widow putting two mites into the offering box, He called His disciples and said: "This poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but

22) *Lk* 10: 38-42

23) *Jn* 11: 25-26

(3)

she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living".²⁴ Other people would not have regarded hers as a large offering and, if they had known it was all she had, would probably have called it foolish improvidence. Christ, however, gave her the credit for sacrificial giving of the highest order.

The Gospels give us ample proof that Christ regarded women as worth communicating with, as capable of comprehending deep spiritual truths, of exercising strong faith and of setting the highest standards of sacrificial giving.

e. Christ's compassion for women

Another of Christ's most striking characteristics was His compassion. This was exhibited towards all mankind, but we can see instances of it being particularly directed towards women. It has been noted already in His dealings with the three adulterous women. When He raised the widow of Naim's son from the dead, He appears to have done it primarily out of compassion for her. It was His compassion for widows, especially, which aroused His great indignation against those who made long, pretentious prayers and then devoured widows' houses.²⁵ For this, He said, they would receive greater damnation.

When He fed the five thousand and later the four thousand men, plus women and children, it was because He had compassion on them.²⁶ Perhaps He had compassion particularly on the women, who were probably feeling guilty at not having made more provision for their families. The disciples not only did all the serving but even the clearing up afterwards.

His dealing with the question of divorce also reveals Christ's compassion for women, who in His time, it seems, had few rights.²⁷ Christ brought his questioners back to God's original plan for marriage that a man should leave his parents and cleave to his wife, and that the two should become a new unity with no thought of anyone else or of breaking the bond. This view was obviously so startling that even the disciples afterward

24) *Mk* 12: 43-44

25) *Lk* 20: 47

26) *Mk* 6: 34; 8: 2

27) *Mt* 19: 3-10

questioned if it is worth marrying at all if one becomes so irrevocably tied to one woman!

When Jesus was on His way to Golgotha carrying His heavy cross, there were many women among the crowd that thronged after the soldiers and they "bewailed and lamented him".²⁸ But Jesus' concern was more for them than for Himself. Courteously He addressed them: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children".²⁹ So, to the very end, in the midst of His own great suffering and distress, His compassion never failed, even for these unknown women.

Those who doubt the compatibility of celibacy with friendship would be reassured by His example. He entertained fond love and deep affection for the people and accepted their love in return. He loved each person uniquely as a reflection of God, His Father. Among the apostles He had special friends, and the evangelists seem to go out of their way to tell us of His love for women in general and for a few in particular. In Christ's celibacy there is thus no rejection of heterosexual love.

C. The Ecclesiological ground of celibate friendship

In this section celibate friendship in the tradition of the Church is examined. Friendships in general in the life of celibates, and heterosexual friendships in particular, are nothing new in the long history of the Church. The Church's past is full of significant and exemplary instances of warm heterosexual friendships among her celibate children. History testifies that even those who followed a strictly contemplative mode of life in the isolation of hermitages cultivated deep and enriching friendships. We have the example of Paulo Giustiniani who combined search for solitude with maintenance of friendships.³⁰

It is true that some saints had no deep friendships, but many others had warm heterosexual ones. A great many included a feminine or masculine presence in the dimension of their cel-

28) Lk 23: 27

29) Lk 23: 28

30) Jean Lelercq, *Un humaniste ermite: Le Bienheureux Paul Giustiniani (1476-1528)*, Rome, 1951

bacy. They always look towards transcending all such friendships by their intense love for God, but the richness and effectiveness of their personalities depended much on their friendship.

Robert Murray has made an excellent survey of the experiences of the saints and great men in the area of heterosexual friendship, a summary of which is given below.³¹ The origins of the consecrated celibate life in Christianity remain obscure despite much debate by scholars. The interpretation of the relationship with "virgins" discussed by St. Paul is disputed. As for the origins of monasticism, many scholars now look at the Jewish sectarian movement known through the Qumran discoveries; its members seem to have developed the ascetical vows of the *nazirim* in a direction untypical of the main-stream Judaism which stressed the excellence of marriage. It seems likely that Syriac-speaking Christianity, arising in northern Mesopotamia developed under the influence of this type of Judaism. Like the Qumran community, the earliest Christian communities in the Syrian area described themselves as the "Covenant", and it appears that baptism was at first reserved for those who vowed celibacy and were called "Sons and Daughters of the Covenant". The oft-repeated view that the monastic life began in Egypt must be corrected; we find the earliest forbears of monks and nuns in the syrian "Covenant" communities.

The evidence is that at first these consecrated men and women often lived together in a "spiritual marriage", either both starting as virgins, or modifying the actual married state by renouncing sexual relations. By this renunciation they expressed their desire and affirmed the possibility, of living as "eunuchs" for the kingdom of heaven, and of anticipating in this life the future condition of the resurrection, in which Christ had said there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but that people are like angels in heaven.³² Thus began the tradition of calling the consecrated celibate life the "angelic life", while the partners in these spiritual marriage were called "beloved" and the women

31) Robert Murray, "Spiritual Friendship," *The Way: Supplement* no. 10, Summer 1970, pp. 62-70

32) Mt 22: 30

"virgin companions". This movement seems to have been common to the main Church and to the Gnostics.

It is not surprising, however, that human nature found the tension too great and reacted in either of two ways. On the one hand, we find self-castration and other ascetical excesses. On the other there was often a natural slide from 'spiritual' to sexual love, which caused the Church definitively to reject this earliest way of celibate life and even, to a great extent, to bury its memory. From this reaction stems the tradition of warning against intimacy between celibates and the opposite sex, and of preventing it in practice.

Yet, as we examine some of the earliest writers, we find that, in one context, they stressed this note of warning and in another they had beloved friends, closely united with them in devotion to Christ, to whom they wrote long and intimate letters. St. Jerome who had a tortured attitude to sexuality and marriage had a loving relationship with the widow Paula and her daughters who followed him to Palestine. A happier example, though in great suffering, is that of St. John Chrisostom and the widow and deaconess Olympias, about fifteen years his junior, whose director he had become during his brief and painful attempt to govern the Church of Constantinople. John's last three years were spent in exile. In these circumstances he wrote a series of letters to Olympias, which are among the classics of spiritual direction and friendship alike. As in almost all these relationships, we have the letters only of the man, but they reflect what the woman's must have contained. John grieves more for Olympias' pain at his pain than for himself, and writes at great length to strengthen her spirit. Though he always addressed her with courtly honorifics, a strong and tender love shows through constantly, revealing how John feels their separation and longs for the comfort of personal presence no less than Olympias. He asks her to be cheerful so as to cheer him up, in return for his own love for her. It is evident that spiritual strength passed not only from John to Olympias, but that her love sustained him in those bitter last years of his prematurely broken life.

It is surely no accident that the period of epic romances, of Dante and of the rise of the modern love lyric, also produced

some of the greatest classics of mystical love, and also many records of spiritual friendship. To turn to actual examples, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare immediately spring to mind, followed by St. Catherine of Sienna and Bl. Raymond of Capua. But without doubt the most beautiful record of spiritual friendship from the Middle Ages is in the letters of Bl. Jordan of Saxony, second Master General of the Dominicans, to Bl. Diana d'Andalo and other early sisters of the Second Order. Though we lack Diana's letters, Jordan's show abundantly the depth and tenderness of their mutual love in Christ. Again and again he expresses, even more explicitly than Chrisostom, their mutual longing to be together. Only if we remember the context of total consecration to Christ in the contemplative and penitential life can we avoid misunderstanding the tone of these letters. They express a union of hearts surely as total as has ever been achieved even in the context of married love, yet entirely unpossessive, each unreservedly inspiring the other to a deeper love of Christ and wider love of others.

In the book "To Heaven with Diana", a collection of letters written by Bl. Jordan to Bl. Diana, Gerald Vann writes: "We have seen... enough to convince us of the humanness of Jordan's holiness and of the human reality of his love for Diana: whether he is counselling or warning or pleading or simply telling her of the little details of his travels, always there is the same underlying depth of feeling for her... He cannot wonder that their separation fills him with sadness too; when he has to part from her it is with a heavy heart, but doubly so because of her own sorrow; the more he realizes how truly and wholly she loves him, the more incapable he is of forgetting her, the more often she is in his thoughts, for her love of him deepens and strengthens his love for her; the letters reveal clearly all the help that she was giving him. That is why they are in effect such a wonderful treatise on Christian friendship. The principles emerge clearly. First, the human love is to be wholly integrated into the love of God and therefore made wholly obedient to the will of God. Secondly, if that is done it becomes a thing of joy, though also of sorrow, and a thing very precious in itself. But thirdly, it is more than that: It is also an immense help; a strengthening in times of difficulty, a consolation in times of

distress, but also something more still: a positive help to the deepening and purifying of the personality in general and of the love of God in particular".³³

The age in which the state of consecrated celibate life moved its enemies to destroy it and its friends to repair it by vigorous reform or by new foundations, by no means excluded the possibility of spiritual friendship; on the contrary, we find it sustaining the activity of many of the greatest rebuilders of the Church. If the intimate tones of Jordan are not heard again, one senses the reality of a similar experience in the relationships of St. Theresa of Avila to St. John of the Cross and Antonio Gracian, of St. Catherine of Genoa to Ettore Vernazza. Affection comes to clearer expression in the circle of the widow Vittoria Colonna, who was a source of spiritual strength and stability not only to the layman Michaelangelo but also, with mutual spiritual benefit, to Reginald Pole, the future cardinal in his exile.

St. Theresa makes several loving references to St. John of the Cross. "You would never believe how lonely I feel without him (John of the Cross)... He is indeed the Father of my soul and one of those with whom it does me most good to have converse".³⁴

Her love for Fr. Gracian, her favourite confessor and the first Provincial of the Reformed Carmel, is well known. She characterized the three weeks she spent in the company of Gracian at Beas as "the best days of my life". About him she wrote: "I have not yet fully realized his worth. To me he is perfect and better for our needs than anyone else we could have asked God to send us. I have never seen anyone so perfect and so gentle". About her first meeting with him she commented: "I would not have missed seeing him and dealing with him for anything in the world".³⁵ In a letter that St. Theresa wrote to Gracian in 1576, a year after their first meeting, we read: "For many reasons it

33) Gerald Vann, *To Heaven with Diana*, pp. 53-54

34) Letter 261

35) Cf. P. Rohrbach, *Journey to Carith*, New York, 1966, pp. 180-181

is permissible for me to feel great affection for you and to show it in the dealings we have together".³⁶

The Saint employed several tactics to make friends. To the Dominican theologian, Bartholome de Medina she sent a gift with instructions that it should be handed over to him before his dinner and commented: "We shall see if he will write me a few lines"³⁷. To attract the attention of the Jesuits, her advice to the Prioress of the Carmel in Seville was: "Think out questions to ask them, for this is what they like".

St. John of the Cross, too was a very loving person. In a letter of thanks to the lady Juana de Pedraza he made this remark: "If they (the letters) were not so tiny, it would be better"³⁸. When the same lady found fault with him for leading a solitary life and forgetting her, he wrote: "But I do not, as you also say, live a sheltered life, and it hurts me dreadfully to think that, when you say that, you really believe it. That would be too bad after so many marks of kindness, which you have shown me when I least merited them. I have done anything but forget you; just think, how could I forget one who is in my soul, as you are"³⁹.

The greatest example, of course, in this period, is that of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jeanne Frances de Chantal. Accounts are so easily available, both in the enormous series of letters by both and in good biographies, that it may be enough to say little here even though the importance of the example would call for more. It is evident that human attraction was strongly in play from the start, and it seems that the relationship in its early phase found expressions which the saints later felt should remain a secret between their conscience and God. For the rest, the fundamental pattern of this friendship is like that which we have seen in earlier examples: total devotion to Christ, a life of deep prayer and abnegation, a love expressed not in possessiveness but in generous encouragement to love others in Christ and to partnership in great works for the Church.

If the majority of examples mentioned so far have been canonized saints, more recent times afford instances which are

36) *Ibid.*, p. 182

37) *Letter* 51

38) *Letter* 9

39) *Ibid.*, 18

not so unapproachable. In the last century one thinks of père Lacordaire and Mme Swetchine and, in his way, Cardinal Newman, whose circle of warm friendships included one with Mother Margaret Mary Hallahan. In our century, the life of Ronald Knox shows how this priest of truly evangelical chastity was rejuvenated by a friendship which was to sustain him during his grinding work of translation and for the rest of his life.

Published material, however, gives us outstanding examples. We have the whole series of letters, lasting nearly forty years, which Cardinal Herbert Vaughan, founder of the Mill Hill Fathers, wrote to the widow and convert Lady Herbert of Lea. She lovingly treasured every one, but unfortunately he destroyed all hers. It is a remarkable collection, an authentic continuation of the great tradition of spiritual friendship based on a profound and shared spiritual life. One cannot overestimate what this relationship did for Vaughan as priest and bishop, and therefore for the Mill Hill missionaries and for the Church, as well as for Lady Herbert in her painful life after becoming a Catholic.

The next example is Teilhard de Chardin. When we consider the man himself, a totally committed religious, and the importance in his life of his friendship with his cousin Marguerite with Leontine Zanta, we see yet another in the great tradition of spiritual friendships, and understand how Teilhard de Chardin was sustained on his lonely way. In *The Making of a Mind*, the collection of letters Teilhard wrote to his cousin Marguerites during the First World War, we have one concrete example of how he integrated heterosexual love into his life and the effect it had upon him. The letters are a perfect expression of the "interpenetration and constant exchange of thoughts, affections, dreams, and prayers" between a celibate man and a celibate woman, and yet without doubt deeply and genuinely bound together in loving union and oneness of being.

Even today many good priests and religious cultivate healthy heterosexual friendships. Fr. Columban Browning invokes his own experience when he writes about celibate friendship. He discloses that whatever good there is in him is due for the most part to what he has received from those he has loved and who have loved him. His desire to be and remain a priest and a

religious is due in great part to what he has received from those who he knows care deeply for him. Moreover in his experience with others he has too often witnessed lives that were lived in a narrow world of frustration because the persons involved had no awareness that someone truly cared for them. They were so walled off from others that any experience of love was virtually impossible. On the other hand, he has known those who were on the verge of the same state of frustration but who came to experience the warmth of human love and whose lives were transformed by the experience. Far from being turned away from giving themselves to Christ, these persons were dramatically deepened in their vocation and in their ability to give themselves to Christ and others. With such evidence before his eyes, Browning could never be convinced that all deep friendships with persons of the opposite sex should be ruled out for priests and religious⁴⁰.

Fr. Eugene Kennedy tries to analyse the real sources of energy which enable priests and religious to offer themselves generously to their people. When he inspects these realities carefully he finds answers that are far different from those prescribed in manuals of piety and in the traditional expectations of retreat masters. What keeps the effective priest and religious going is the people in his life who respond to him with love rather than with timid respect. The relationships in which a priest or religious finds the fulness of his personality strengthened and liberated from his work of service, are not just with clerical or religious comrades. In fact, the sustaining values in the lives of many priests and religious arise from friendship with the laity, often with women who give them a loving kind of support and understanding which they could find nowhere else. What gives vigour to celibate life and redeems it from bachelorhood is the action of the Spirit of love in human relationships. The most effective priests have learned the deepest lessons of life in the context of their human relationships. It is here that they have begun to grasp the meaning of faith and hope because they have had to take the existential risk inherent in practising these virtues in loving relationships. They have had to confront and conquer their selfishness in learning to love others, and they have had

40) Columban Browning, "Religious and Love - A New Dimension?" *Review for Religious*, 27 (1968) p. 638

little help for this task in the manuals and commentaries that were compiled for another and apparently more fearful era. It is in the context of his relationships that a priest learns the real meaning of prayer⁴¹.

The Shallert-Kelly study done in the United States indicates that many priests who have no intention of marriage or resigning from the ministry have found meaningful relationships with women. More than three-fourths of priests are in strong agreement with the statement that a priest benefits by close relationships with women⁴². Maurits De Wachter, professor of moral theology at Louvain University, presents the case of L, a nun, and K., a seminarian soon to be ordained. They had met at summer school. Over a period of time a deep relationship developed which they recognised and wanted to maintain while keeping their celibate commitment to Christ and their vocation of service to others in the Church. They felt responsible in a particular way for one another. Their relationship was lived out openly: families, superiors and friends were informed. They were happy, furthermore, to tell all who were interested of their experience. They considered such sharing an essential element of their relationship with one another and with them⁴³.

Finally, there is the present writers' own limited experience. His views on celibate friendship represent also a personal testimony. His thoughts have been drawn from his own living and loving and from an attempt to help many priests and religious practising heterosexual friendships, as well as from the study of the current literature on this subject. Heterosexual friendships rank among the finest gifts of God and some of the most enriching experiences.

41) Eugene Kennedy, "Telling It Like It Isn't," *The Priest*, 25 (1969) pp. 137-138

42) Cf. Robert Springer, "Notes on Moral Theology," *Theological Studies*, 32 (1971) p. 478

43) Maurits De Wachter, "Celibacy in Man-Woman Relationship: A case Study," *Louvain Studies*, 3 (1970) pp. 83-98

D. The divine dimension of celibate friendship

a. Genuine human love as charity

There are those who think that human love is not quite compatible with divine love because the former is said to involve some self-indulgence. Authentic love for man can in no way be in conflict with the love of God because God is love and love cannot war against itself. We must avoid the polarization of love into divine and human, which has haunted Christianity from the beginning. Too much stress has been laid on the distinction between charity and human love. All the love in this world proceeds from the human heart but takes different forms. As long as we are united to Christ, all our love is Christian love and contains all the riches of charity.

Genuine love for God means genuine love for our neighbour. Genuine love for our neighbour is at the same genuine love for God. To serve our neighbour in whatever way possible is to serve God; to serve God is to love Him. To relate to others and to be related to them are to make God acceptable to us and us to God. In and through our relationship with others we manifest, and grow in, charity and holiness, thus becoming more and more present to God.

The statement that to love human beings authentically is to love God does not mean that only by loving men we love God. Some knowledge of God and a free acceptance of the interpersonal relationship with Him is necessary for friendship with God. Such a knowledge and acceptance may remain implicit for some time, but it cannot remain so for very long, because a genuine and dynamic implicitness will issue soon in explicitness. Love cannot be lived completely unless it is explicit. Hence any interpretation of Mt. 25: 40 which does not include an effective recognition of Jesus in one's neighbour, at least as an end product, is basically false. It goes against the main thrust of the Gospel which invites us to faith in Jesus, and this is a loving knowledge of Him.

Authentic human love is charity for many reasons: 1) As God summons man to serve Him, He also requires him, in his vocation, to be a covenant-partner with Himself. In concrete

terms this means that God directs man to his fellowmen. He wills that man's being should fulfil itself in an I-Thou relationship with Himself and others. God takes man so seriously into covenant with Himself that He calls him to an inclusive fellowship with other human beings.⁴⁴

2) All the saints agree that it is sometimes quite right and even obligatory to abandon explicit contemplation and turn to human need. St. Jeanne de Chantal once asked St. Francis de Sales if he could meditate in the midst all his pastoral cares. "No", he answered, "but I am doing something that is just as valuable. God indeed so loves mankind and wants us to love it with such solicitude in His stead and in His name, that we are doing something agreeable to Him when we leave Him when necessary to come to the aid of our brethren". "O my Jesus", cried St. Theresa, "how great is the love you bear the children of men! The greatest service one can render you is to leave you for the love of them and for their greater benefit".⁴⁵

3) Love of man and love of God has the same foundation. The ground of unity in our lives is the divine will that transforms our will to His own. The problem of human love is basically not a problem of man's love but God's. Our love for God is an expression of His love for us; our love for others is an expression of His love for them. In everything it is God who works in us both to will and to work.⁴⁶

4) Human love as an act of self-transcendence needs God's help.⁴⁷ The creation of genuine community, the attitude of genuine love towards one's fellowmen, is an act of self-transcendence, and as such, is possible in the present order of things only in the power of an energy that comes from outside, namely grace, of which it is itself the principal expression.

44) Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III, The Doctrine of Creation*, Edinburgh, 1961, p. 116

45) *Oeuvres*, ed. des Carmelites de Paris, V. p. 324

46) *Phil 2: 13*

47) Patrick Burke, "God and My Neighbour," *Worship*, 41 (1967) pp. 168-169

By definition, a being cannot transcend itself by its own powers. To do this it needs energy from an outside source. The act by which a human person reaches out of himself in love for another person, attaching just as much importance to the other as to himself, or even more, so that if necessary he will give his life for the other, is an act of self-transcendence. It is possible only by the gift of energy from an outside source, namely, God.

5) There is unity between the natural and the supernatural. There is a general unwillingness today to make a clear existential distinction between the natural and the supernatural. A two-tier conception of Christian life, with some opposition between the natural and the supernatural, between the material and the spiritual, between nature and grace, is no longer tenable. This two-tier conception of spirituality has led to regrettable consequences such as the denunciation of anything that is natural or pleasurable. Secondly, a religious activity can become non-religious if it is done for a selfish motive as when a preacher delivers a sermon for his personal glory. A non-religious activity, on the contrary, can become religious as when Our Lord washed the feet of His apostles.

Thirdly, as Karl Rahner says, it is only by becoming fully human that we become holy; and we will not find God in a religion that is more or less divorced from life. The Christian is not one-half natural and half-supernatural. Although grace and nature are distinct, they do not exist as separate entities as if grace is placed above nature like a kind of superstructure. The nature of a spiritual being and its supernatural elevation are not opposed to each other, to be kept separate or confused. The supernatural elevation of man is, though not due to him, the absolute fulfilment of his being.⁴⁸⁾

In the fourth place, we cannot make a strict separation between the natural and the supernatural world for yet another reason, namely that there is actually only one reality – the world redeemed by Christ. Since God is at the very centre of reality we are really building up the kingdom of God by building a better world for men. By being concerned about our neighbour, by helping him to attain fulfilment, we love him supernaturally.

48) Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations IV*. p. 183

In the fifth place, in the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* the pronouncement on earthly values is clearly a positive one. We are exhorted to have a great respect for them. The Christian message does not oppose what is temporal to what is eternal. The Christian should have a profound respect for such earthly values in their true perspective and keep them directed to what is eternal. This means that he should not place his ultimate happiness in them. He must use them as intermediate goals or as filling stations on the way to God. This is the meaning of integrating the temporal with the eternal. Human values, far from being a threat to the grace of God, are the ground in which it thrives. These values are part of God's plan of salvation.

In the sixth place, we must try to understand the doctrine of the cosmic Christ. The entire world is dependent for its existence and continuation on the Word of God who became man. According to Paul, everything comes from God in Christ.⁴⁹ From the beginning God's plan of creation has been centred in Christ.⁵⁰ Christ is present in the world.

Paul understands this dynamic presence of Christ in the world in terms of His dominion over the world.⁵¹ The world exists in Christ and is oriented towards Him because everything will finally be reconciled, accomplished and completed in Him. The risen Christ fills the entire world with His dynamic presence and this presence holds the world together and enables it to forge ahead. The New Testament teaching regarding the relationship of the world to the risen Christ is known as the doctrine of the cosmic Christ. Vatican II lends support to this doctrine. According to the Pastoral Constitution the risen Lord is the focal point and the goal of all human history and progress. Christ takes the world to Himself and the world receives its value through its relation to Him.⁵²

49) *1 Cor 8: 6*

50) *Eph 1: 9; Col 1: 16, 18*

51) *Eph 1: 10*

52) *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, nn. 38-39

Our spirituality must benefit from this insight into the sacredness of created realities. To be a Christian is to be fully human. We ought to recognize that a man loving his wife, a friend sharing with his friend, a nurse looking after the sick, a teacher imparting knowledge to students, a mother taking care of her children, a shopkeeper serving his customers, and so on, are performing something sacred and Christian. Having a meal with the loved ones, taking a swim in a pool, enjoying a drama or movie, looking at a landscape relishing a friendship, experiencing the joy of achievement, etc., are holy enough to become part of an authentic Christian life. Life, work, rest, friendship, sexuality and everything else in this world is holy. "Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected".⁵³

Christian life supports all that is genuinely human. It heightens the capacity of human nature for fulfilment. By being elevated to the supernatural order, man is equipped with a greater capacity for happiness, peace, suffering and love. All that we do is grace-bearing provided it is authentically human. Everything offers material for prayer and is a stepping-stone to more intense union with God because the entire creation is a sacrament of God.

6) To love man is to love God Himself. There is no need to love our brother for the sake of God. We should love him for his sake; and loving him for his sake is automatically an act of love of God, and this for various reasons. In the first place, we have the puzzling doctrine in the Synoptic tradition that what is done to the least of His brethren is done to Christ Himself. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."⁵⁴ Christ does not say that what is done to the least of His brethren for His sake is done to Himself. It is quite clear from the narrative of Matthew 25:31-46 that although the deciding factor in the salvation of the individual is his love for God, this very love of God is achieved through the love of his neighbour, and without necessarily any direct thought of God. The just will be surprised to learn that they were serving Christ when they served their neighbour. The final judgment on us will depend, we are told by Christ, not on our conscious love

53) *I Tim* 4: 4

54) *Mt* 25: 40

of God, but on our love for our brethren for their own sake. Experience confirms this truth. A mother, for instance, does not love her child for the sake of God. She loves it for itself. Her love is directed to the personality of her child. The same is true of the love of a good husband for his wife. He does not love her for the sake of God, nor does he love God in her or her in God. He simply loves her for what she is.

Moreover there is a psychological problem in loving a person not for his own sake but for somebody else's sake. It is not possible genuinely to love a person for the sake of another person. We may show kindness, respect or honour for extrinsic reasons, but loving is always for the intrinsic reason of the person concerned.

Thirdly, every human being is an analogical participation of God. To love the participation of God is to love God Himself. This is a Principle enunciated by St. Thomas. He says that love for an image, considered *as such*, is only love for its model⁵⁵. We may compare God to the sun and ourselves to its rays. When we love the rays we love the sun from which the rays proceed.

We are the spiritual images of God and therefore essentially different from material images such as statues and pictures. These images do not possess anything more than an exterior, phenomenal similarity to their model and therefore, in honouring material things in so far as they are images, we are unconcerned about the material of which they are made, whether cloth, stone or paper. But a spiritual image is an image in essence and hence should be loved for its own sake, as a true end and yet not as the ultimate end since all its worth comes from its participation in the model, God.

In the fourth place, a person is an autonomous subject. He is never a means to anything or anyone; he is to be related to as a good-in-himself. The obligation of charity requires that we consider a person as an end in himself and not as a means, not even to God. The reason for this is simple. If we take man

55) *ST* II-II., q 81, a 3, ad 3; q 8, a. 3, ad 3
(4)

in his totality we find that he is essentially a relation. An individual achieves his maximum personhood in his relation to God. Every human being possesses absolute value because of the fact that he has already been radically affirmed by an Absolute Person, God. He deserves to be loved for his own sake because he has already been radically loved by the Absolute Love. There is no problem in loving man for his own sake because relationship to God is an essential part of his total being. Man in his totality is rooted in God. He is at once substantial in himself and essentially related to God.

In the fifth place, if we were to love our neighbour only for the sake of God, there would be only an extrinsic relationship between the two loves in so far as the love of one's neighbour has been commanded by God. Admittedly, this is a strong connection for one who is intent on observing God's commandments. In point of fact, history shows us that very many, if not most, of the decisive steps which have been taken to improve the condition of mankind - the abolition of slavery, the spread of public education, the development of industry, science and medicine, the democratization of society - these very Christian achievements have for the most part been accomplished by men who acted apart from any specifically Christian motive. While the Church has fostered the worship of God, it has been often left to those outside the Church to implement effective love of one's fellow-men in the form of justice.

At the present time the seriousness of this situation is widely realized. A number of thinkers have grasped the fact that it is imperative to strengthen the link between Christianity and love for man, if Christianity is to continue to have relevance for man in those circles of society especially which are concerned to advance the frontiers of human achievement, and where the future of mankind is largely decided. There has been a mistaken tendency, however, to go about this task by going to the opposite extreme and giving the impression that ultimately God is identified with man.⁵⁶

56) P. Burke, *art cit.*, pp. 162-163

Lastly, as a certain writer pointedly remarks, it is a deformation of charity to substitute Christ for one's brother⁵⁷. Instead of loving his brother such a person discards him for Christ "inside", as if Christ were in a man in the same way as a banana is in its skin.

This happens when charity has become a response to an ideal instead of a response to persons, when we make charity a form of obedience rather than a form of human love. Obedience can be easier than love, because love requires that we see something good to respond to whereas obedience requires only that we take somebody's word for it and respond on faith.

It is possible to love "all men" in the abstract while loving very few if any men in the concrete, merely by considering each person "a soul to save", a "thing" to practise charity on. This attitude, if expressed in words, would be: "It really doesn't matter who you are; you've got a soul to save and I'm going to treat you nicely because you carry Christ within you." A more wholesome expression of charity is: "It does matter who you are; you have got a lot to offer and I'm going to treat you nicely because you are you."

What happens to God then? Does He get lost in the shuffle? On the contrary, the union between God and every creature is so intimate that every creature exists more in God than it does in itself. We are participated beings; God has in a way put something of Himself in each of us; and further, in making us members of His Mystical Body, He has made this participation even more intimate.

That is why fraternal charity without human love is like flattering God rather than praising Him. If we sing at an amateur show and we later find out that the audience suffered through the performance but applauded just to salve out egos, we might feel crushed. We are not fully appreciated unless others like our singing as well as ourselves. Similarly, God is not fully appreciated if we respect His creatures just to humour Him.

57) Joachim Frederick, "Charity and/ or Human Love," *Review for Religious*, 25 (1966) pp. 501-503

The role of charity, then, is not to substitute something for human love but to make it universal. Spiritual writers do a good job if they make us fear merely human love, provided that what we fear is the *merely* and not the *human*. That is why our Lord, in laying down the great commandment, said: "This is my commandment - that you love one another as I have loved you".

b. Genuine human love as means to the love of God

1. Human love as a powerful aid to the love of God

Well-ordered human love is a natural milieu for the love of God. Genuine love gives a better understanding of God and brings us closer to Him. It is an experience which serves to strengthen our commitment to God and to bring it to adult stature.

1) Modern theology sees human love as a powerful aid to the love of God. According to one author, human interpersonal relationships through affective regard and communion are necessary for anyone who wishes to grow in an intense loving relationship with God. Human love removes the psychological obstacles to the full appreciation and articulation of our love for God and for our neighbour, and also to the full appreciation of God's tender love and care for us. If we have no experience of being loved by human beings, we cannot really appreciate God's love for us. We need both the experience of being loved by other human beings and that of loving them if we are to be able to live the supernatural life of love. It is not enough to have the experience of love only as a past recollection of earlier life in the family. We need to have constant actual experience of loving. It is easy to forget how to love in a human way, unless this practice is renewed and stirred to new growth by continual interpersonal involvement.⁵⁸

Another author sees human love which is the result of an 'I-thou' encounter with one's fellowmen as the natural milieu in which charity grows.⁵⁹ A man cannot dispose himself for loving

58) Joseph Skora, "Chastity and Love," *Review for Religious* 27 (1968) pp. 16-19

59) Nicholas Predovich, *The Challenge of "Radical" Renewal*, Staten Island, 1968, pp. 81-83

communication with God unless He is known evaluatively. This loving communication starts on the level of what we usually call friendship. Without a direct 'I-thou' encounter with his fellow-men, it would be impossible for a person to establish a deep relationship with the supreme 'Thou' who is God.

Louis Evely considers human love as a necessary factor for having an evaluative knowledge of the love of God.⁶⁰ When we begin to love others we begin to comprehend the love which God has for the whole world. We will also realize the intensity of His love, and our love will begin to take on more universal dimensions. When others talk about His love, we will know what they mean. We will understand the meaning of the saying that Christ would have become man even if there were only one person in the world.

2) One of the powerful antidotes against selfishness which obstructs our union with God is true communion with our brethren. The asceticism involved in well-ordered human love at least weakens our self-centredness and facilitates communion with God.

The ascetical aspect of love is quite evident even after only a short experience of living with others.⁶¹ We are quite aware that even in spite of ourselves, human love strips us of much disordered self-love which is at the root of all sin. It almost forces us to practice the various expressions of charity, faith and hope. For consecrated persons it is a constant occasion for personality building, self-denial and self-integration. Love implies collaboration which generally means doing something that one does not always like doing. It also means that one may not have the kinds of diversion, relaxations and so forth that one would especially like.

Constant readiness to respond to the needs of others at all times is one of the most authentic forms of Christian mortification and penance ever realized. The total gift of ourselves to others

60) Louis Evely, *Lovers in Marriage*, London, 1968, p. 86

61) Charles Schleck, "Community Life: Problematic and Some Reflection" *Review for Religious*, 29 (1970) pp. 544-547

through service in the often very trying circumstances of our relationships with them affords ample opportunity for asceticism.

Human loving is a combination of light and darkness, of faith and doubt, of help and hindrance, of coming together and withdrawal, of hurt and forgiveness, of emptiness and fulfilment, of rejection and acceptance, of fragmentation and integration, of death and resurrection. Human love is always attended by pain and struggle which if faced manfully can lead us to deeper love of God.

3) Lack of human love can create a risk to our love of God.⁶² There is always the danger that some inferior earthly good may try to fill the void left by the renunciation of marital love. The person who is married has broken down one of the great forces of egotism, has destroyed within himself the hard insensitivity characteristic of the bachelor or spinster. But it is all too easy for a celibate to compensate for lack of earthly love with ill-disguised affective and emotional entanglements of the material order, such as undue attachment to material goods. For example, in place of human love one can substitute a desire for honour or for power, or a natural pleasure in one's own talents and their fulfilment. One can seek a superficial life of excitement, entertainment and social activity.

2. Human love as a condition for the love of God

1) One need not be able to form a clear concept of this experience: even the atheist experiences God in loving others. Even in his case the absoluteness of personal love for another 'thou' silently says 'yes' to God, and the giving-up of self has its end and origin in God. In other words, this essential reference to God is the basis of the ultimate depth of love between human beings, of its power to reach the other person in his uniqueness, of hope for the final validity of the two existences that are affirmed in such love, and of the radical fidelity of such love.

62) Robert Gleason, *To Live is Christ*, New York, 1961, pp. 130-131

2) Man goes to the supernatural through the natural. Man is an incarnated lover, a spirit in the flesh.⁶⁶ He is immediately concerned through his senses with the relative and the finite. If he is intelligently alive, he finds a fascination here. Embodied himself, he tends toward the corporeal even though it cannot rest his incessant longing for the unlimited. As a matter of fact, this vastly complex human person attains the unlimited through the limited. This is why he must learn to appreciate created goods and yet be detached from them, to use them as though he used them not, to rejoice, weep, work and play as though he did not rejoice, work and play.⁶⁷

A rightly directed person-seeker is more in union with God than he is with the created reality he immediately pursues. This is so because any finite goodness is utterly derived at every moment from the infinite goodness. It is a created manifestation of uncreated love. It is a wavering, weak flow from the firm, almighty fountain. To see the flow in terms of the fountain is to see it as it is. To be fascinated by human beauty as a reflection of divine beauty is to be fascinated by God. This kind of human love is centred on the divine. This is why he who loves the least of the brethren loves the Master.

3) Throughout history Christian thinkers have rejected any system that has maintained that God could be loved in ways that are wholly discontinuous with human experience and human love. St. Thomas's teaching that all knowledge starts with sense knowledge is just one example of the traditional teaching that experience of God is rooted in human experiences.

The most basic aspect of a man's faith in God is the belief that God really cares about him; that he has worth and value in God's eyes. There is no intrinsic reason why man necessarily should believe that God cares for him. The way a man relates to God will ultimately depend on how he relates to others. Before one can make the "leap" to God, he has to know somehow that God cares for him and loves him. There is nothing within him which says this has to be so. Not even the logic of the cosmos

66) Thomas Dubay, *Pilgrims Pray*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 98-99

67) *I Cor 7: 29-31*

can give the reassurance that God cares. Rather, it requires another person's love in a human relationship. Only this can communicate to man the possibility that God loves him and only this will enable him to make the "leap" to God.⁶⁸

Now being a complete man or woman depends on psychosexual maturity. If we are emotionally immature, we will be affectively turned in on ourselves, closed off to others, never able to transcend our own self-interest. Since this growth process has a great deal to do with our being a healthy man or woman, and since being a healthy man or woman conditions our capacity to relate personally to others, and since charity is to some extent this relation supernaturalized, it is clear that fulfilment of the great commandment involves some very human underpinnings. Assuredly grace can accomplish miracles. But, as a general rule, arrested psychosexual growth is a very poor foundation upon which to attempt to structure a supernatural life at whose heart is a relational thing: charity.

Divine love is very difficult today without communication at human level in a climate of genuine human love. It is dangerous to press upon anybody the duty of getting beyond earthly love when his real difficulty lies in getting that far. We talk so glibly about the supernatural, forgetting – in practice if not in theory – that the supernatural presupposes and perfects the natural. The acid test of our love for God is the love we have for one another. And this implies much more than a simple act of the will, or some sort of abstract recognition of one another's subjectively. It requires a certain affective union by which each tends to and cherishes the other in his or her very uniqueness. Because we are men or women and not angels, there is always present in every form of true human love some kind of physical, emotional response or resonance which we call affection and from which we should never play shy.

It is only in and through the *human* that the divine element can operate and achieve its fulfilment in the world. And so, the vocation offered by God to the married and to the celibate is

68) Charles A. Curran, *Psychological Dynamics in Religious Living*, New York, 1971, pp. 125-126

fundamentally the same. Both must give of themselves in love that is *real* and *unrelenting* in its demands on their persons.

Our love of God should be more than a reference to a principle and should contain in it all the warmth of an authentic interpersonal relationship. Experience of human love can go a long way in helping us to love God more affectionately.

3. *Human love as the richest source of loving encounter with God*

Dietrich von Hildebrand has given a clear exposition of this point and a summary of it is given below.⁷⁰ Every good has a specific mission to perform in favour of man and a distinctive aid to give on his way to God. Every good can exercise an explicitly religious function in the case of those who have learned to regard it as an expression of God's loving kindness. Any good such as life in a beautiful environment, a liberal profession which is a source of happiness, freedom for the development of one's personality, opportunity to contemplate the sublime beauty of nature, occasion to enjoy the intimacy of a good person, etc., can mean a gift of distinctive quality to its possessor. The contact with the values objectively present in such goods definitely raises the spirit of the person who perceives and appreciates their worth, and brings it nearer to God. The moment a high value takes possession of the spirit, the spirit is awakened to its proper state, is brought back from the circumference to its centre and is raised, though momentarily, above the indolence and dullness of its normal condition. When values make an appeal, the spirit becomes for the moment at least the absolute master of pride and concupiscence. At such a moment a person breaks through the shell which has been covering his spirit and pierces the dreary mist that covers it; the spirit is in a better position to seek everything that is good. When a high value takes hold of us, we seem to shed the scales from our eyes, to perceive the world as it really is, which hitherto had been hidden from our vision because of the routine of everyday life. We feel as though the divining barriers of human respect and selfish isolation from our

70) Dietrich von Hildebrand, *In Defense of Purity*, Chicago, 1970, pp. 117-122

brethren have disappeared and as though we see that in the profoundest depth of our being, we are immediately united with God and with all men. The nobler a value is, the more effectively does it fulfil this religious function. The higher the value, the more surely does it produce effects of this kind. Next to the love of God, there is no value which is more sublime than human love.

The specific religious function which the possession of the higher goods fulfils becomes more evident when we consider it from another point of view. In every person who is not wholly indifferent there is an urge towards some sort of genuine satisfaction and happiness. The possession of a good thing of high rank and noble quality frees an individual from attachment to inferior goods, in as much as it opens to him a region of his spirit that is really deep; and satisfaction at this deeper level enables him to dispense with the gratification of more superficial desires. It is a matter of ordinary experience that the importance in our life of such things as food, drink, sleep, and other surface pleasures and comforts becomes greatly decreased if our spirit is deeply moved by some higher good, for instance, by the meeting of a dear friend after long absence. We feel that we are freed from the petty craving for the shallow gratification of everyday life. We are not annoyed at the deprivation of some comfort when our heart is filled with a profound joy, for example, the joy of the recovery of a dear person from a severe illness. Contact with higher goods always supplies us with a standard by which to measure the lower goods. When we are in possession of a superior good, attachment to inferior goods seems absurd.

Moreover, attachment to a good and the desire to possess it is all the more unselfish in proportion to the greater depth and nobility of the good. Devotion to goods which produce spiritual happiness, such as art or deep-rooted ties with others, is essentially less egoistic than devotion to goods which give sensible pleasures such as delicious food, tasty drinks, bodily comfort, etc., because the former are more founded upon a genuine response to value than the latter. Contact with higher goods helps us to outgrow attachment to inferior goods, to overcome egoism and to penetrate further into the world of values. Yes, the possession of higher goods, when they are properly under-

stood and appreciated brings us closer to God. No wonder that human love is the most effective means of encounter with God.

Further, the possession of noble goods produces in us a sense of thankfulness towards God. When the values contained in them take a profound hold of us, they are experienced as a special effect of God's goodness towards us; we feel ourselves surrounded by his loving providence and our glance is drawn upward to Him in heartfelt gratitude. This element of heartfelt thanksgiving is also a powerful destroyer of pride and concupiscence and introduces us directly into the presence of God. The mission of the higher goods of this world to bring us nearer to God is clearly seen in the case of the highest earthly good, namely, conjugal love. Over and above the profound efficacy of every genuine love between human beings in freeing and uplifting the spirit and leading it to God, the complete community of love and life peculiar to marriage possesses, when understood and experienced in the right way, a specific power to shatter pride. Profound love for the partner with whom life is to be spent in common up to the end, frees the spirit from attachment to superficial goods such as property, power, external honour, wordly success, etc. The unreserved surrender of the spouses, the union of two human beings in mutual love, means entering into the profoundest natural depth of the spirit. This deep and noble happiness of conjugal love which draws the glance upward to God in heartfelt gratitude frees married lovers from proud self-adherence and from petty attachment to comfort, to the pleasures of the table and to frivolous amusements. The person who has been vouchsafed the supreme earthly happiness of genuine conjugal love becomes increasingly emancipated from all other goods of inferior value. The same can be said, though in a lesser degree, of consecrated persons who have been blessed with good interpersonal relationships. When love for others fills the heart with happiness, the renunciation of everything else in the world becomes an easy matter.

It is worth repeating that our knowledge and love of God are basically grounded in our knowledge and love of human beings. Our capacity to know and to love God depends, to a large extent on what we experience in our contacts with our brethren. Our ascent to God is fostered and enriched by our openness to others and by our genuine love for them. While

opening ourselves to our brethren in genuine love, we can find God more, and thereby advance progressively in our love for Him. Our loving relationships with others are truly destined to promote, intensify and enrich our love of God.

C. Human love as Encounter with the Absolute

Human love has a divine aspect. Human love should not be considered as something natural, as distinct from the supernatural virtue of religious love which is charity. 1) Genuine human love is at least the beginning of loving someone as Christ loves him. It is the start of a splendid growth in charity.

2) As Cardinal Suenens observes, love is the purest reflection of God. Indeed, it is God living in men's hearts. God is love. Love is the basis of divine existence, its definition and expression. All being flows from Love as from its well-spring, and everything has Love as its ultimate goal. God is not a lonely God. It would be difficult to understand a God who was a single Person. God is a society of persons. God is a complete living communion and perfect reciprocal exchange. God has made us to His image and likeness. He has made our hearts like His own. The human heart is created in the image of the Trinity itself. It bears the mark of the Trinity and its genuine activity is a participation in the divine activity of love.⁷¹⁾

There is only one love – that infinite, eternal and perfect love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father which we call the Holy Spirit. We are not able to understand and grasp love as it exists in God – that total and perfect mutual self-abandonment of the three divine Persons to one another. But this love is not a remote and distinct entity for us. Through our incorporation into Christ we participate in this love. Human love is the manifestation of the love in God through the human heart.

3) Any genuine quest after human love is a quest after God. Suenens explains this well. There is an innate hunger in us for love. What everyone desires and looks for, on this earth, is love. On the surface, man's desires and ambitions are many

71) Cardinal Suenens, *Love and Control*, Westminister, 1961,
pp. 38-40

and seem to be different from one another: Business, politics, art, literature, sailing the high seas or flying through the skies. But actually, beneath appearances and apparent differences, what all men are looking for is something simple and very touching: They want to love and to be loved. All men hunger and thirst after true love – a love which knows no time, suffers no wear and lasts for ever. Men sometimes fall into disgrace in their search for love, they go on looking for it instinctively. Without realizing it men are looking for LOVE in their search to love and to be loved⁷². Yes, all quest after genuine human love is an implicit quest after God.

4) The neighbour is a sacrament of God's presence.... Just as Christ is the absolute sign and the irrevocable assurance of God's eschatological mercy to man, so also every man, by the fact of his being a man, is the sign and sacrament of God's mercy to his fellowman.

Perhaps this may be clearer if we reflect that the person becomes himself truly only in encounter with another person; the "I" becomes truly "I" only in confrontation with "thou". Man is made for love; his development as a person depends upon other people. Yet the existence of the other person is not something to which he has a right, but is the gift of God; it is gratuitous; it is grace. We live in an order of grace, and it is this which structures our being as persons. And this order of grace exists only with a view to its final fulfilment in the kingdom of heaven. Thus the other person, by his very existence as our fellowman, is the expression, the sign, and the assurance of God's intention to have mercy on us. And just as a gesture of forgiveness is in itself an act of conferring forgiveness, so our neighbour's existence and being is sacrament, conferring seminally and in anticipation the eschatological mercy of which it is the sign.⁷³

The visible presence of the Incarnate Word in our midst was meant to be transitory. The day would come when His followers would see Him no longer on this earth. The resurrection appearances themselves were intended only for a relatively few.

However, although the risen Jesus cannot be seen with the eyes of our bodies, we know that He is present to us, that He remains in us and we in Him, and that we are also united in communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But we must not conclude that the time for theophanies is over, that in the

72) *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39

73) P. Burke, *art. cit.*, p. 172

Christian economy of the New Covenant, God no longer reveals Himself in a visible way. It would seem that a meditation on the pedagogy used by God in the biblical theophanies results in our discovering a new and permanent theophany: the presence of God in our brethren with whom Jesus particularly identifies Himself⁷⁴.

5) To be loved by another is to experience Christ's love. The best knowledge of what friendship with Christ means is not given in words; it is lived in the deep human experience of another's love. A man comes to learn in an experiential way the meaning of Christ's love in and through the many human loves which enter his life. His bond with Christ will always be distinct, and never merely the totality of his other human friendships. But each new love-bond with another person will reveal a new face to the bond with Christ which is not limited to space and time nor by restrictions of personality⁷⁵.

For Jean Guitton, there is a continuity between the fire-of human love and the flame of divine love. The flames of human love are the very flames of God. Human love gives the taste, the flavour and the first image of divine love.⁷⁶

Speaking of religious women Sr. Mary Alice Wurm notes that a woman given to Christ in celibacy must usually know that she is capable of being loved by a man so that she may feel complete freedom in her choice to be Christ's. If she finds that she is not loved by another human being she may begin to doubt whether Christ really loves her and really wants her as His own in the life of celibate love.⁷⁷

6) In every genuine friendship there is total surrender to the other as self-transcendence and this striving for transcendence is aimed ultimately at the Absolute.⁷⁸ Every other human being whom we meet is just as much subject to finiteness as we are. Yet the overwhelming experience of human love teaches us that the sole appropriate response to it is a total surrender to our fellow human being; an attitude which would be justified only towards the Absolute. Hence every love in its totality shows that

74) Edward Malatesta, "We have Seen His Glory," *The Way*, 14 (1974) p. 10

75) Peter Fink, "Human Dimensions of the Religious Life," *Review for Religious*, 27 (1968) p. 387

76) Jean Guitton, *Human Love*, Chicago, 1966, p. 196

77) Mary A Wurm, "The Celibate's Way of Loving," *Sisters Today*, 42 (1970) pp. 215-217

78) Viktor Steininger, *Divorce*, London, 1969, pp. 11-15

it is at the same time an encounter with the Absolute. This is true whether these lovers consider themselves believers or unbelievers.

Happily married parents who describe themselves as unbelievers can frequently be heard to say: "It is the children who make sense of our life." Logically, it is obvious that this statement is inadequate. For if the meaning of the parents' life lay in the life of their children, then the meaning of the children's life would have to lie in that of the grandchildren, and the meaning of their life in that of the great-grandchildren, and so on: that is, in a purely formal and therefore senseless, constant repetition. Nevertheless, what these parents say shows that they have the right feeling, for in the conscious positive relationship to their children they are striving for transcendence; but since this striving is ultimately oriented to Absolute Being and becomes intelligible in its fullness only in the light of this, the experience of the sense of life can be made precisely in the realization of transcendence through the encounter even though anonymous—which this brings about with the Absolute as with that which really gives meaning.

7) When we love somebody he becomes a mystery. We become aware of another deeper mystery in the mystery of our friend. At the heart of the warm, mysterious and fascinating heart of our friend we perceive a more warm and fascinating heart, the heart of God.

There is the revelation of the divine glance in the face of the friend. God shows Himself in this way in the life of persons with as much evidence as in the highest contemplation. In a good friendship, God is there as the mysterious third person, always present but ever discreet, so that it is a really human love with which the friends love each other. They are not loving an abstraction but a very concrete person of flesh and blood. Human and concrete as it may be, it is a love all transfigured in the divine light. It finds its growth in God, and it is God, beneath a human face, who stands revealed.⁷⁹

8) One of the fundamental axioms of the Thomistic philosophy of the appetite is that every created inclination is by its very nature in more intimate union with God than it is with the participated good which it immediately desires.⁸⁰ Since no object is good except through participation in the divine model, it

79) Yves Raguin, "Chastity and Friendship, *The Way: Supplement*, no. 19, Summer 1973, pp. 116-117

80) For the principal texts, see P. Rousselot, *Four l'histoire du probleme de l'amour au Moyen Age*, Munster, 1908

follows that an appetite can desire something as lovable only because of this participation. Further, the goodness must be recognized precisely under this aspect, since it is the property of every appetite that it terminates in things as they really are.⁸¹ Thus a certain fundamental union with God is an essential presupposition in every created love of whatever type.⁸²

All true love between human beings implies the recognition of the goodness of the other. It also implies, at least implicitly, the recognition of the source of that goodness because the friends realize that the goodness of the other alone cannot fulfil each other. For complete fulfilment something more than the goodness of the friend is necessary, namely, the source of that goodness, God.

9) When we are the object of love we feel that we do not deserve that love. The love we receive is experienced as a gift. But this gift is not from our friend alone because he too feels unworthy of the love we give him. Both feel that something has entered into their love which they did not earn. They receive more than they deserve and give more than they are capable of. They are face to face with the mystery of a love that is greater than the sum of their loves. Human love is an overwhelmingly generous experience which cannot be achieved merely by human efforts. This generous aspect of the experience of love is from God. In human loving there is the implication of a divine love that is its origin and support. God is involved in every human love. Human love is between three persons, namely, between a human "I", a human "thou" and God. In every authentic human love there is the experience of the generosity of our loving God. All true friendship is a gift from the God who loves us. In the loyal gift of love there is an intimation of a greater love - the love of God.

10) In every human situation, there is a built-in inadequacy stemming from the necessary limitation in fact, of the human individual. For man is in principle a dynamic possibility for indefinite development in perfection, and as such, can never be unlimited perfection in fact. When one person opens himself to another completely and thus accepts the other in an unlimited manner, he commits himself to the other as, in principle, unlimited in perfection. Nevertheless, he is aware of the factual limitation of the other and intends both for himself and the other fulfilment through the realization of a relation with the one who is unlimited

81) *ST I*, q. 16, a. 1

82) Guy de Broglie, "Charity: An Essay Toward a Doctrinal Synthesis," *Review for Religious*, 25 (1966) p. 448

in fact, namely, God. In this sense, God is present in every human love because it is God alone who can perfectly situate man in a totally fulfilling act of love.⁸³

11) People who are in love find it natural to be quiet, alone or together. They wish just to be in their love, without doing or saying anything. During these times of quiet they find in themselves a region of peace which is new to them and here it is easy to encounter God and commune with Him. Love often silences one friend so that he may permit the other the necessary freedom to find fulfilment in God. The more a person cultivates authentic human love, the greater becomes his capacity for the love of God.

12) An element of dissatisfaction is a part of even the best of human love. At the centre of every great love there is the pain of some loneliness that results from a complete union that is desired but never achieved. There is a desire to share everything with those whom we love. But the fact remains that we have a central core that is too intimate and personal to be communicated to others. We are alone in the experience of ourselves. No gesture of love can communicate our entire selves to others. Even in the ecstatic joy of interpersonal communion there is an element of non-gift of certain important aspects of the individuals concerned. This explains the feeling that is experienced in even the most intimate of friendships, a feeling that we do not share everything with our friends and that they do not share their everything with us. Happy marriages, for instance, are faced with a traumatic experience. However much a couple may love each other, however intimate a companionship they may have achieved, still they feel that something separates them. They are not able to eat each other. They cannot share everything that they are. They remain, to a certain extent, two incommunicable beings and they face each other as such. This does not mean that they do not love each other intimately and communicate with each other at the deepest level. They do all this, yet there is a barrier between them which is unbridgeable. At certain moments of ecstasy total union seems to be within reach, but these moments pass away quickly and the separateness of the two selves persists. However much each instant of union might taste of eternity, it proves soon to be temporal and transitory.

There is another aspect to the dissatisfaction involved in human love. In the initial moments of intense loving, the lover

83) Gary Greif, "The Vows and Christian Life," *Review for Religious*, 26 (1967) p. 813

gets the impression that the whole of happiness is summed in the beloved. Before long he finds, to his disappointment, that this is not so. There is also the frustration that comes from the apparent or even real inability of the friend to reciprocate adequately the love that has been lavished on him.

A man is never completely happy even when he is happy in the moment of love and friendship. If human love does not provide unceasing ecstatic joy, it is due to the fact that God has kept Himself back in eternity. So He makes even lovers feel empty sometimes in order that they may not make of this earth a permanent abode. The feeling of emptiness that accompanies all human love leads the lovers to gaze beyond the human beloved towards the perfect Beloved who is God. The feeling of nothingness which is inevitable at least sometimes in human loving, is a call to God who is everything. The poverty of human love points to the richness of divine love.

D. Genuine Friendship as Horizontal Mysticism

Genuine friendship can be characterized as horizontal mysticism. Mysticism has a divine dimension and human dimension. The divine dimension of mysticism is mystical prayer while its human dimension is friendship. Friendship is the reflection of mystical prayer at the human level. It is an image at the human level of union with God.

Prayer which is communion with God has a twofold dimension, namely, vertical and horizontal. Vertical prayer consists in a loving chat with God. It is a heart-to-heart talk with God as takes place between two intimate friends. It consists in telling God all that we wish to say and then listening to what He has to say to us. It is being thankful to God for all the favours He has conferred on us. It is being humble before God's majesty. It is feeling sorry for the numerous faults we have committed against God and our brethren. It is being happy in God's presence and in being in communion with Him.

Horizontal prayer consists in finding God and communing with Him in our relationship with others. It is lived prayer rather than formal prayer. God is present in our brethren and we have communication with Him as He reveals Himself to us through them. Christ is present not only in the Eucharist, but in several other realities; one of the most important of which is the human person. Christ is the primal sacrament of God. Each one of us, in so far as we are other Christs, is the sacrament of God to one another. When human relationships are genuine, we have contact with God through horizontal prayer.

E. The Opinion of Some Church Authorities

1) The "Basic Instruction for Priestly Formation" of the Holy See requires that seminarians who arrive towards the end of adolescence, should be given a modified sexual education "which consists more in a positive training for a chaste love of persons than in the sometimes acutely painful preoccupation with the avoidance of sin. In short, it is a training for the relationships they will make in their future ministry".⁸⁴

2) Copies of a symposium entitled, *Priesthood and Celibacy*, were distributed by Pope Paul VI to the Synodal Fathers in 1971. One of the contributors to this book, Fr. Paul Chauchard regrets the lack of collaboration in mutual respect between the two sexes. They do not understand that they need each other in order to be more fully themselves. This highlights the necessity for every celibate to have a relationship with others and particularly with the opposite sex, on the precise understanding that such relationships are continent and non-erotic. The author complains that the Church has a long way to go before it learns how to get the best out of the collaboration of consecrated men and women. At present this collaboration is far from satisfactory through fear of eroticism, although this risk should not lead to the renunciation of elements necessary to collaboration, but should lead instead to an education in self-control which would reduce the risk to a minimum.⁸⁵

3) In a document issued by the French Bishops on priestly celibacy in October 1976, we read among other things: "In his relationships with women the priest must pass from a possessive to a disinterested attitude. He must avoid over-intimate relationships as well as those of domination or dependency. He must consider women as equals, while recognizing and respecting their vocations, responsibilities and differences. To renounce an exclusive bond with a partner does not mean withdrawal within oneself but implies the resolve to establish many deep bonds with all others."

"It seems to us to be very useful for a priest to be able to find a spiritual guide to whom he can speak openly and in whom he can find a confidant but also a friend who stimulates and challenges him."

84) *Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, Rome, 1970, n. 48, p. 38

85) Paul Chauchard, "Celibacy and Psychological Balance," in: *Priesthood and Celibacy*, Milan, 1971, pp. 853-854

"That the priest develop a truly balanced personality, he ought to make time for culture in all its forms, for leisure and for maintaining ties of friendship, none of which is a luxury for anyone. Too many priests hesitate to dedicate sufficient time to these matters for fear of not being sufficiently available."

"Finally, the celibate life, no matter how full of activities and relationships it may be, will be spiritually empty and insignificant without a personal relationship with Christ. Christ is the other par excellence, *not in a way that replaces contacts and friendly relations with other persons but as the foundation and inspiration of them all*".⁸⁶

4) The Bishops of Ireland wrote in a pastoral letter: "Men and women are complementary to one another, not just in their physical sexuality, but also in the psychology, their sensibility, and even, in important respects, in their spirituality"⁸⁷. This statement seems to imply that heterosexual interpersonal relationships help also spiritually.

5) Bishop Francis Mugavero of the Brooklyn diocese has the following to say on the matter under discussion: "Sexuality is so much more than genital activity. It is an aspect of personality which lets us enter other persons' lives as friends and encourages them to enter our lives. This dimension of sexuality must be developed by all men and women not only because it is a gift making us more like God, but is also so very necessary if we are to follow Jesus' command to become lovers⁸⁸. It is a relational power which includes the qualities of sensitivity, understanding, warmth openness to persons, compassion and mutual support. Who could imagine a loving person without these qualities ?"

"Does it appear unusual that as members of the same Church some can embrace married love and others celibate love as expressions of personal sexuality? "

"We are members of a Church whose people have been part of the successes and failures of almost 2000 years of human living. We are continually being brought out of slavery by the loving Spirit of God. One form of that slavery is the ignorance of how to love - how to use our sexuality for truly loving, for deep and lasting relationships"⁸⁹.

86) Cf. *Doctrine and Life*, 27 (1977) pp. 61-62.

87) "Human life is Sacred: Pastoral Letter of the Hierarchy of Ireland," *Doctrine and Life*, 25 (1975) p. 911

88) Mt 22: 36-40

89) "Sexuality - God's Gift: A Pastoral Letter," *Catholic Mind*, 74 (May 1976) pp. 54-55

6) Fr. Paschal Rywalski, the Minister General of the Capuchin Order observes: "For some years now the number of men and women consecrated to God who are engaging in deep friendships has been steadily growing. This is no doubt due to the discovery of the human values of interpersonal relationships. It is indeed, possible for celibates to have close friendships in complete chastity, friendships which clarify and strengthen their option for the Lord. It does not follow that celibacy must so close and harden the heart that it is no longer capable of loving . . ." ⁹⁰.

7) In the Constitution and Rules of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, we read: "Every priest needs normal contact with women as a source of personal and apostolic enrichment" ⁹¹.

8) The United States Catholic Conference's study on the *Spiritual Renewal of the American Priesthood*, appears to cautiously approve heterosexual friendship. While the document insists that such friendships be clearly celibate in the strictest sense, and that they be subjected to advice from one's peers and confessor, it also seems to allow for a rather open attitude to the circumstances which build up the friendship, even to the point of recommending that such friends learn to be able "to waste time together". But it also insists that the ability to *pray together* is a sure sign that the friendship is progressing in the right direction ⁹².

F. The Opinion of Theologians

St. Thomas Aquinas affirms that friendship is the ultimate purpose of all laws: "As the great commandment is charity, since every law aims at establishing friendship, either between man and man, or between man and God, wherefore the whole law is comprised in this one commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, as expressing the end of all commandments; because love of one's neighbour includes love of God, when we love our neighbour for God's sake" ⁹³.

St. Theresa of Avila writes: "If we act with moderation and discretion in our affections which are not wholly spiritual, everything will become meritorious and what seems to proceed

90) Paschal Rywalski, "Following Christ in Chastity," *International Capuchin News*, no. 29, December 1975, p. 4

91) *Constitutions and Rules of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate*, 1966, art. 45

92) Ernest Larkin and Gerard Broccolo, *The Spiritual Renewal of the American Priesthood*, Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1973, pp. 25-38

93) ST I-II, q. 99, a. 2, ad 2

from nature will become virtue.... Being weak by nature, an affection of this kind, for example, for a spiritual, holy, discerning guide, is a great help to us, in doing great things for the service of God.... Let us begin by practising this spiritual friendship moderately, and even if a little natural affection becomes entwined, that will do no harm provided it is not exclusive. Of course, we shall certainly be told that a friendship of this kind is not necessary, that God alone suffices, but as regards myself I shall tell you if I am not in hell today, I owe it to friends of this kind”⁹⁴.

According to St. Theresa of Lisieux, in giving oneself to God, one's natural sensitiveness increases day by day so much so that one gets passionately attached to one's relatives. “I don't mean it's a virtue to keep your distance from your own companions in religion.... One's heart, in giving itself to God, does not lose its natural sensitiveness; on the contrary, it grows more sensitive as its love becomes purer and more divine. I have my full share of this sensitiveness, in the love which I bear towards you (Marie de Gonzague) and my sisters; nothing would please me better than to go on living among my own family, to fight God's battles”⁹⁵.

The saintly Dom Marmion has this to say on the same topic: “God expects every creature to love and serve Him according to its nature. The angels must love God in an angelic manner, that is to say, without heart, or feeling, or affection, for they possess none of these things. But God looks to man to love Him humanly, that is, with his whole heart, soul, strength, and mind and his neighbour as himself. Among the gifts which God has granted us to lead us to Himself and to make our exile here below possible, there is the love and affection of those around us. We must be on our guard not to let the devil deceive us by showing us things beyond our human strength and contrary to the intentions of God.”

“It would be intolerable to have to act as souls without bodies, while at the same time being enwarped, in spite of our will, by the senses, affections and human ties. Come, my dear child, do not keep on with this excessive ‘sublimation’: be content to act with simplicity and ask Jesus to give you the gift of loving with detachment, that is to say, in such a way that no human affection may become indispensable to you.... Make use of your affections as you make use of other creatures. You do not

94) Cf. Philip Dion, *Sister's Vow of Chastity*, New York, 1966, pp. 88-90

95) *Autobiography* - Knox Translation, pp. 259-260

depend upon creatures if you wish to make use of them only according to God's will"⁹⁶.

Teilhard de Chardin asks whether there cannot also be a bond of love between a man and woman not free to marry just as deep as that of married people and fulfilling, but in which passion, genital expression and the cohabitation consonant with having a family have been sacrificed or transcended in imitation of Christ. He would seem to be saying that not only there can be such a friendship, but there should be, if masculine-feminine complementarity is so essential to the completion and perfection of human nature. Did Christ's celibacy limit or hinder Him in any way from achieving the deepest possible personal union with those He loved, whether they be men or women? Does the celibate way of life, authenticated and inspired by Christ, necessitate a truncated form of human existence and something less than the deepest possible personal union with men and women? Just as in our Lord's case, so in the life of each one of His celibate followers, there must be an integration of heterosexual love within the larger context of their celibate existence with its twofold witness. Celibacy necessarily excludes passion, genital expression, and one's own family. But in doing so, it must not exclude heterosexual love under the form of masculine-feminine friendship which can be described as an interpenetration and constant exchange of thoughts, affections, dreams, and prayers⁹⁷.

In the words of Fergal O'Connor, if marriage is meant to be creative of human personality, particularly from its sexual aspect, so too must celibacy be. A consecrated celibacy which tends to frustrate or stultify anything good in the human personality would obviously be defective. A wrong understanding of sexuality, or a wrong understanding of chastity will affect adversely both the celibate and the married persons. If either brings to their respective states a view of sexuality that sees it is something to be suppressed or indeed as something to be sanctified because it is evil in itself, then, of course, meaningful sexual development will be very difficult. More specifically, from the point of view of the consecrated celibate, it is important for him to realize that the object of his dedication includes both men and women. His mission is to all mankind, both men and women. To this extent, he is in no way different from any other person except that he has explicitly assumed a responsibility to all. In Christian terms he has undertaken to love all with whom

96) Cf. Philip Dion, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-90

97) Cf. Charles Freible, "Teilhard, Sexual Love, and Celibacy," *Review for Religious* 26 (1967) p. 291

his work brings him into contact; to love them, not in an abstract, cold, distant way, but to love them with all the warmth, affection and generosity that is part and parcel of genuine human love. What his celibacy demands of him is the preparedness of mind, the willingness of heart and the real capacity to give the love that he is asked to give.⁹⁸

Bernard Haring writes that it is generally true of all Christians that one cannot really love the invisible God if he does not love his visible neighbour. It is in a very special way true for those living under the vow of celibate chastity that the fulfilment and meaning of this vow depends on love of neighbour. It must be essentially a redeeming love but it must therefore be a warm human love. One does not protect and foster consecrated celibacy by forbidding friendship but by promoting the right kind of friendship.⁹⁹

According to Karl Rahner, true celibacy has nothing in common with the sexlessness of the eunuch but is possible only in sound relationship between the sexes, where one recognizes oneself as a man and a woman as woman. We must understand the purpose, the nature and limits of a very special kind of love, a real spiritual friendship between a priest and a woman. It occurs too in the history of the saints. It can perfectly well exist in many degrees. This is not to be grossly misinterpreted as a loophole.¹⁰⁰ Human loves are perfectly compatible with the total and immediate love of God to which the priest or religious has consecrated his life.¹⁰¹

Rene Voillaume considers friendship as more and more necessary for the perseverance of priests and religious. Men are no longer satisfied with being alone. If this need for friendship is, on the part of some, the sign of a weak will and of immaturity, it is none the less true that the creating of a close friendship and the sharing even on the intimate and personal level of what is essential in our religious life, are assets and constitute in themselves a more perfect realization of charity.¹⁰²

98) Fergal O'Connor, "Chastity and Celibacy," *Doctrine and Life*, 18 (1968) p. 135

99) Cf. Augustine Rock, *Sex, Love and the Life of the Spirit*, Chicago, 1966, p. 231

100) Karl Rahner, *Servants of the Lord*, p. 153, 171

101) Karl Rahner, "The Unity of Love of God and Love of Neighbour," *Theology Digest*, Summer 1967, pp. 90-91

102) Rene Voillaume, *Interpersonal Relations with God*, Ottawa, 1967, p. 35

Conclusion

Deep love for persons of the complementary sex in celibate life, is one of the most mysterious and controversial questions attracting the attention of the contemporary Church. It is essential that a fruitful and deep discussion is carried on, because this question can be the source of immense joy and holiness for the Church of today and of the future. Heterosexual friendship in the celibate life seems to be a new expression of the charism of celibacy. We are not in a position to understand it fully, nor can we clearly specify its new demands. But one thing is sure. Celibate heterosexual friendship cannot invariably be regarded as a denial of the value of celibacy. Since an old charism is appearing in a new form, it is expected to demand a renewed asceticism for its practice. It will certainly demand a life of deeper faith and more fervent prayer.

The celibate's cultivation of love must be marked with the stamp of celibacy. It should be God's love that is given and received in celibate loving. The charismatic grace of celibacy must condition every interpersonal relationship of the celibate. The relationships of a celibate are different from those of the non-celibate. The presence of God should be one of their constitutive elements. All love relationship in celibate life must be sealed by the celibate's consecration to God and by his renunciation of conjugal love if he is not to betray his charism of celibacy. He should, therefore, see to it that all his affective relationships with others are the sacramental incarnation of his personal relationship with God. If he does this, he can be sure that God will come to him through their instrumentality and that he will be a medium which God uses to communicate Himself to others. Heterosexual friendship in celibate life, coupled with deeper prayer and greater asceticism, can be expected to open up a new glorious era for the Church.

The Phenomenology of Love

One can understand what love¹ is, only through love itself. Though it is a universal human reality, it cannot easily be defined or described. It is a primordial phenomenon and has no genus which would enable a meaningful definition. Love is essentially and primarily an interpersonal phenomenon. Though we speak of the love for an object, for an animal etc. it is only in a derived and adapted sense. So too, the actual and primary form of love is between two persons. It is what binds together a loving *I* to a beloved *thou*.² The love for a community or the love for humanity in general is secondary, derived. Primarily, therefore, love is the binding of an *I* to a *thou*, where the *I* accepts and affirms the *thou* and this acceptance and affirmation exist for the *thou*.³ In this love and 'existence-for'

1. About love there is a vast literature especially in theology, philosophy and psychology. To mention just a few works: J. Pieper, *About Love*, Chicago 1974 (original: *Über die Liebe*, München 1972); R. May, *Love and will* (Fontana), London/Glasgow 1972; E. Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (Unwin Books) London 1962; M. Buber, *Das Dialogische Prinzip*, Heidelberg 1973; F. Ebner, *Fragmente*, Aufsätze, Aphorismen. *Zu einer Pneumatologie des Wortes* (Schriften I), München 1963, especially, 87-95, 110-23, 187-97, 254-73, 645-50, 800-19; K. Barth Kirchliche Dogmatik IV/2, 825-953; P. Tillich, *Liebe, Macht, Gerechtigkeit*, Tübingen 1955; D. Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum communio*, München 1960; J. B. Lotz, *Ich - Du - Wir*, Frankfurt 1968; B. Welte, *Dialektik der Liebe*, Frankfurt 1973.

2. In spite of a certain grammatical and linguistic clumsiness we may be allowed to follow here the example of the great masters of the dialogical thought and make use of the personal pronouns as nouns, since this usage helps to express better the personal and dialogical character of love.

3. We speak here, of course, of love in its purest form or to use the classical expression, love as *agape*. Love as *agape* is the most characteristic form of personal love because it is founded on the being or person of the beloved and not on his contingent characteristics which are changeable, as is the case with love as *philia*, *eros*, and *libido*. They are dependent on attraction and repulsion, on passion and sympathy. In all love there is a desire and seeking after fulfilment. Then love is based on separation and the longing for reunion which belong to the essential nature

which is free, spontaneous and gratuitous, the *I* establishes the *thou*, affirming anew the being of the *thou* and enabling the *thou* to accept and affirm itself. It makes the *thou* lovable, free, capable of response, really human.⁴ The love of the *I* is a dialogue, a self-gift to the *thou*.

But in this self-gift the *I* does not absolutely lose itself in the *thou* but comes to itself, finds itself and wins itself.⁵ The *I* exists only in correlation to the *thou*.⁶ The relation of the *I* to the *thou* reaches deep down into the very core of the *I* and that from the very beginning itself.⁷ By its very nature the *I* is open to the *thou* and tends to the *thou*. This openness to the *thou* utters itself in dialogue. As 'dia-logue' or address and response, freely granted and accepted, there takes place between the *I* and the *thou*, first of all, a communication of knowledge, love being no doubt implicit. In freedom both turn to each other and open their inner being to each other. When this communication of knowledge becomes deep and intimate, the dialogue grows more and more into an exchange of love.⁸ It expresses itself as trust, reliance, self-gift, joy in the presence and even in the existence of the other, and so on. It is through this dialogue of love that the *I* becomes most properly its own self. At the same time as the *I* goes out of itself in love and self-gift, the *I* itself is established, made free and capable of response. And this not merely through the return of love from the *thou*, but even through the very fact of the exodus and self-gift of the *I* to the *thou*. The openness to a *thou* in love and self-gift is simply a necessity for the *I* to come to itself and be itself. It is in love that the *I* ripens to maturity, ripens to its own full self, ripens into a full person. Then it is the very characteristic of a person to be in relationship, to go out of himself to the other in

of creaturely life. The longing for reunion is an element in every form of love, and its realization is experienced as happiness. Love as *agape* is, however, characterized by the fact that it desires the fulfilment of the longing of the beloved *thou*. Cfr. P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, Chicago ⁸1963, 280.

4. Cfr. J. Pieper, *About Love*, 26–38; R. Affemann *Snude und Erlösung in tiefpsychologischer Sicht* in: L. Scheffczyk (ed.) *Erlösung und Emanzipation* (Quaestic Disputata 61), Freiburg 1973, 15–29.

5. J. B. Lotz, op. cit., 41.

6. F. Ebner, op. cit., 32. 129.

7. J. B. Lotz, op. cit., 41.

8. J. B. Lotz, op. cit., 72f.

order to be himself.⁹ And the full exodus of a personal *I* to the other, which can properly speaking be only a personal *thou*,¹⁰ is love.

The loving *I* goes out to the beloved *thou* for the sake of the *thou*. The *thou* is always the first in the relationship of love. The moment the *I* seeks primarily its own self in its love for the *thou*, the relationship degenerates from love into self-seeking. The *thou* is always a goal and never a means¹¹. If for its own sake that the *I* seeks the *thou*, then the *I* makes the *thou* into a means, into an object, and thus depersonalises the *thou*. Then it is the characteristic of the person to be a goal, to be sought, and affirmed for his own sake. But in the same way as the *thou* is not a means for the *I*, so too the *I* is not a means for the *thou*. The *I* goes out of itself in love and self-gift to the *thou*, enabling the *thou* to respond, freeing its freedom of love and self-gift¹². The *I* expects also the love, the acceptance, the self-gift of the *thou*. Although the *thou* comes always first in love, the *I* too comes always into love¹³, though as the second. Therefore the loving *I* and the beloved *thou* go out of themselves and make a gift of themselves to each other, establishing, accepting, affirming each other as persons, as lovable, as free, and in this love they exist for each other. It is evident that this dialogue of love can exist only in freedom.

What essentially and primarily moves the *I* to go out in love and self-gift to the *thou* is the *person* of the *thou* itself in its original, once-for-all, incalculable and inexchangeable character¹⁴. The loving *I* discovers the person of the beloved *thou* as good and lovable. It is goodness, and above all moral goodness, that moves to love.¹⁵ However, since man is in becoming, the

9. The idea of *person* is, as is well known, a contribution of Christian theology to anthropology. The concept of person expresses from its very origin the idea of relationship to another, or the ability to be-towards-another. *Person* is, therefore, not simply a self-enclosed substance but a being that reaches out of itself and reaches out to the other. That is also expressed by the concept of the *spirit*. To spirit belongs openness to the other, the ability to reach out of itself: cfr. J. Ratzinger, *Dogma und Verkündigung* München-Freiburg 1973, 205-23.

10. J. B. Lotz, op. cit., 71.

11. J. B. Lotz, op. cit., 71-75.

12. Cfr. E. Fromm, op. cit., 23-25.

13. Cfr. J. Pieper, op. cit., 35f. 57-90.

14. B. Welte, op. cit., 27-31.

15. B. Welte, op. cit., 32.

goodness of the *thou* also is in becoming. It is not complete, it not a possession. In this process of becoming good, the *thou* may be lagging behind. In consequence the *I* discovers in the *thou* also what is less lovable and good, or even what is downright bad and hateful. But behind what is bad and hateful the loving *I* discerns the hidden possibility and the hope of the growth into what is good and lovable. This possibility and hope are also good and lovable. In discerning even in the deficiency of the *thou* the possibility and hope of being good and lovable and in going out to it in acceptance, affirmation and self-gift, the loving *I* grants a new being to it — that of being loved, accepted and affirmed. The earlier lack of this being had made the *thou* less, diffident, afraid of itself and its weakness, or even aggressive, bad and hateful¹⁶. But in the love and self-gift of the *I* this lack of being is supplied and in consequence this love fills the *thou* with confidence and courage to overcome its weakness, aggressiveness and hatefulness. Love is thus active and creative. It brings into being goodness and loveliness where they were lacking.¹⁷

But what is less good and lovable, or even bad and hateful in the one also makes the partner suffer. It is something opposed to the very nature of love. It is negativity. And love has to triumph over this negativity and come to itself. Then love is the negation of the negativity of love. Love brings with it intimate mutual knowledge.¹⁸ It tends to lay bare and see bare even the weakest spots. But that brings with it also the danger of anxiety and fear of loving and being loved.

Nobody likes himself to be laid bare and seen bare. And one who is loved is aware that what is not good and lovable in oneself makes the partner suffer. One can be afraid of disappointment from oneself and be too much on guard against oneself. Or, one can be afraid of disappointment from the partner and be too much on guard against the partner. One can easily let oneself be lost in the partner, or one can easily be led to set oneself though in the partner. In the way of love, therefore, there is not only a self-revealing and self-gift, but also a self-veiling and self-withdrawal. But if that is the destiny of love in a world

16. The same thing is expressed by E. Fromm from a psychological point of view when he says: "The awareness of human separation, without reunion by love — is the source of shame. It is at the same time the source of guilt and anxiety": id., op. cit., 14.

17. B. Welte, op. cit., 27-43.

18. Cfr. E. Fromm, op. cit., 26-29.

that is finite and provisional, fallenness and sin have caused further such chaos in both the one and the other of the partners, that it is extremely difficult to keep the right proportion. Love requires, therefore, personal engagement and even a hard struggle.¹⁹ It is not only a gift but also a task, not only a pervading happiness but also a demanding effort²⁰, that can require even the utmost sacrifice. It not only beatifies, it can also bring grief and pain²¹, and that in proportion to the intensity of the love in the one and the depth of the disorder of what is less lovable and good in the other. Genuine love can exist in total contradiction to the immediate likes or dislikes of the other.²² But even so it does not cease to be love. It may even be a love grown more intense through forgiving and being forgiven.²³

The actual and primary form of love, it was observed, is between two persons. However, when the *I* and the *thou* encounter each other, they always find themselves embedded in a *we*²⁴, which is more than the *we* made up of the *I* and the *thou* alone. The *I* is open not only to the *thou* but also to this *we* of the community. Therefore the *I* as also the *I-thou* have a relationship to the *we* which is more than the sum of the *I-thou* relationships.²⁵ To refuse this openness or relationship to the *we* of the community means to be lost in selfishness. Not only the *I*, but also the *I-thou* can close themselves up in exclusion or refusal of openness and love to the *we* in a selfish enjoyment of each other. Genuine love, however, is always open and tends to the *we*. It tends to grow into a community of love. It strives even towards a universal love, though this may never reach the same intensity as the love between the *I* and the *thou*, because of the natural limitation of man. It is in openness to, and love of, the *we* of the community that *I* and the *I-thou* reach their full maturity. Therefore this openness and orientation to the *we* of the community is a necessity for both the *I* and *I-thou*. But the *we* of the community is not a means for the *I* or the *I-thou*. It is itself a goal. Nor are the *I* and the *I-thou* means for the *we* of the community. The *I*, the *I-thou* and the *we* of the community are all goals, open

19. Cfr. B. Welte, op. cit., 43-56.

20. Cfr. E. Fromm, op. cit., 9-14.

21. "Ex amore procedit et gaudium et tristitia": St. Thomas, Summa theol, II-II, 28, 1.

22. J. Ratzinger, op. cit., 149; J. Pieper, op. cit., 39-42.

23. "Die Schmerzen der Liebe vertiefen, wenn sie angenommen werden, die Liebe": J. Moltmann, Der gekreuzigte Gott, Munchen 1973, 65.

24. J. B. Lotz, op. cit., 96.

25. J. B. Lotz, op. cit., 97.

towards one another and supporting one another. In this openness and support of one another, they themselves develop and reach their full maturity. Actually it is in the *we* that love first reaches its fullness.

He who loves experiences in his love meaning, harmony, happiness. Love holds for him the promise of fulfilment, of totality, of salvation. In his love he finds that his own being is affirmed. He finds himself enriched by a new being, or rather, he is reborn a new being. In this new being he feels himself drawn to love all men and even all creatures. He finds meaning in his own existence and in existence in general. Love changes the whole horizon of existence; changes existence itself, filling it with light, harmony and peace.²⁷ From this experience of love emerges an instinct, a glimmering insight, that love is the ultimate meaning of existence; that in love is final fulfilment; that it is the final key to unending happiness, totality: all-embracing salvation.

Yet in the sphere of experience itself this instinct, this glimmering insight, can only lead to a longing and a hope. Moreover the satiating, fulfilling, beatifying moments of happiness experienced in love bear in their very bosom the fear and the anxiety of the loss of love. Love is always accompanied by this fear and anxiety not only because of the dialectic of love itself as noted above, but also because of the negativity of pain and death that can at any time overtake the loving *I* or the beloved *thou* and they will inevitably at some time overtake both the one and the other. That is an element of negativity in the very experience of love itself between the loving *I* and the beloved *thou*.²⁸ But there are also several other aspects of negativity that diminish the happiness of this love, that deprive it of its fullness. For example, the consciousness that the world is still far from the realization of a universal love; that there is injustice, oppression and hatred; that human freedom and human dignity are trampled upon; that the world is still haunted by hunger and want, by wars and natural calamities, by unjust social structures; that these are very often traceable to human guilt, both personal and collective. All such negativities detract from the fullness of happiness that the experience of love imparts. They diminish that sense of harmony and fulfilment, totality and meaning. They diminish in a way love itself. Again, love wills totality, universality. In the love of a loving *I* for a beloved *thou* is included love for all men, love for all creatures love for the whole range

26. J. B. Lotz, op. cit., 98.

27. B. Welte, op. cit., 21f.

28. Cfr. R. May, op. cit., 99.

of being itself.²⁹ The fullness of this love demands fulfilment, meaning, happiness for the whole of creation.³⁰ It demands the victory over all limitation, all negativity, both in the partners and in the whole world. But is such fullness of love possible? On the other hand, are the human instinct, the glimmering insight, the longing and hope of the human spirit, a meaningless illusion, an unrealizable dream?

Man longs and hopes for the realization of the fullness of love. Yet he is aware that he cannot himself achieve this goal. If it is to be achieved, then it is to be granted. Here his instinct, his longing and hope, point towards a mystery, that is both the source and the fulfilment of all love and meaning. And here precisely Christian revelation tells man, that such a mystery of love, of meaning, namely God, has revealed himself. The whole Bible bears witness to this self-revelation of God as the source and fulfilment of love, meaning, salvation.

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29. B. Welte, op. cit., 22; P. Tillich, Systematic Theology I, 280.

30. Cfr. J. Ratzinger, op. cit., 141-155.

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